

# India Now

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This PDF is prepared by Sukhwant Hundal in memory of his father  
Shivdev S. Hundal and mother Harbans Kaur Hundal.

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# INDIA NOW

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## Textile Workers' Strike Continues

Followings are excerpts from an article by Bharat Patankar from Frontier (July 2, 1983) which provide recent information about the continuing strike of the textile workers in Bombay which has entered 19th month.

From all sides, the government and opposition parties alike, propaganda is being made that the Bombay textile strike has virtually ended. The Government claims that the strike is over and most of the mills are running as usual. In this atmosphere, which has been prevailing for the last 5-6 months, thousands of textile workers walked 50-80 miles from their villages to the district towns of Kolhapur, Satara, Sangli and Pune in February and March and told the government and the masses of people, "Who says they won't give it - we won't stop without taking it!" (kon mhanto denar nahi, ghetlyashivay rahnar nahi!)...

In no previous strike have industrial workers and white collar workers alike in Maharashtra contributed financially as they have for the textile workers. Not counting expenditure for posters, rallies, Datta Samant's election campaign, etc., almost Rs 30 million help was collected by nonstriking workers and employees and given to the striking textile workers, in the form of direct strike benefits to workers forced to stay in Bombay, fees and books for school children and extra aid to particularly needy or sick workers. Industrial workers in Bombay, Pune and Nasik went on a one-day strike on 10 April, 1982 and then on a 2-hour strike on June 4, 1982, and textile workers outside of Bombay went on a separate 1-day strike in July. Then in October, Bombay workers went on strike for the third time for 3 consecutive days and participated with textile workers in the jail bhara movement which was lathi-charged

and dispersed. At least 5 times during the strike, long marches were organized in which thousands of non-textile workers participated.

While this was going on in the cities, in the third month of the strike, toiling peasants and agricultural laborers from the rural home areas of the textile workers collected 3000 quintals of grain and sent it to the workers forced to stay in Bombay with their families. Not only did toiling peasants participate in the jail bhara at various taluka places, but during the February-March 1983 "foot marches" the villagers, often without information, welcomed the textile workers walking to district towns and provided tea and food. Workers in cities and villages collected packets of food for the marchers with nearly 80,000 packets collected in Kolhapur for an estimated 12,000 marchers and 40,000 in San-

continued on page 8

### INSIDE

Racial Violence in Sri Lanka	4
Warnings from Pondicherry	4
Prostitution With Religious Sanction	6
Bombay Textile Strike	8
Algae as a Source of Protein	11

## Women's Movement Scores SC: Rape Victim does not Require Corroboration

Dolores Chew

[Two precedent-setting decisions were handed down in Delhi recently. The first was Justices MP Thakkar's and AN Sen's decision in a rape case, which holds that the testimony of a rape victim does not require corroboration if it does not suffer from any 'basic infirmity', and that conviction could be based on the victim's single uncorroborated testimony. In the other case, Judge SM Aggarwal, Additional Judge of Delhi, handed down the death sentence to the three accused in the Sudha murder case, the first time the death penalty has been awarded in a case of dowry death and the first time a woman has been sentenced to death by a Delhi court.]

"Why should the evidence of a girl who complains of sexual molestation be viewed with the aid of spectacles fitted with lenses tinged with doubt, disbelief or suspicion? To do so is to justify the charge of male chauvinism in a male-dominated society," states

the judgement in the rape case. Commenting further, Justice Thakkar said, "A girl in India is aware of the implication of making such a charge." The judgement said that the problem has special significance for women in India because though they have been worshipped and idolised, they have also been exploited and denied even-handed justice. In the case in question, BB Harjibhai, a government employee in Gandhinagar, Gujarat was convicted of assaulting 2 children aged 10 and 12 years. One girl escaped, but the other, according to medical evidence was assaulted. The parents of the two girls wanted to hush up the matter but Kundaben, a local social worker, took up the case. Leading 500 women, she marched to Harjibhai's house and demanded an apology. When he refused, a criminal case was filed against him. He was convicted by Sessions Court and the High Court.

continued on page 6

## Hundreds Killed in Floods

KISHAN BAJWA

Over 550 people were killed during the recent floods that swept the Saurashtra region of Gujarat in late June. At least 43 people died in floods and landslides in the Konkan region of Maharashtra early July. Floods hit the northern parts of Karnataka also with at least 6 people losing their lives. Thirteen people drowned in the floods affecting Assam, West Bengal and Meghalaya as a result of overflowing of the Brahmaputra. Recently, 30 people have died in floods in Northern India.

In Junagadh district in Saurashtra region of Gujarat, the flood caused by heavy monsoons on June 28 killed over 60,000 cattle and damaged over 50,000 houses. Over 200,000 people were affected. According to one official, property damage could run into tens of millions of rupees. The

damage caused to the region was the worst since 1979 when a dam burst killed more than 1500 people. Last November, the area was also hit by a cyclone that killed more than 500 people.

The United News of India quoted the state's Home Minister Prabodh Raval that Chief Minister Solanki, who is from Congress(I), has once again urged the Center to set up a radar station on the Saurashtra coast to give early warning about cyclones in the area. Earlier requests apparently went unheeded. Solanki also asked for a review of the irrigation system in the area and stressed the need to modernize the communication system along the coast.

PRIORITIES: GROSSLY MISPLACED

This seems to have become a ritual; every year, India faces droughts for

continued on page 8

## Sri Lanka Govt should Protect Tamils

RN Raju

Violence has overtaken Sri Lanka claiming hundreds of Tamils as its victims. The Jeyawardhane government has blamed Tamil extremism as responsible for the state of violence. It has imposed an internal emergency and has deployed its armed personnel with the right to shoot suspects at sight and dispose of the bodies without any formal investigations. All these developments cannot but cause concern to anyone interested in human rights and particularly to those who would like to see the Southern neighbor of India not waste its meagre resources in such dissipative violence.

The Sri Lanka government has protested the comments offered by the Indian government as indicative of

daranayake in suppressing the movement organized by the Janata

The Sri Lanka government is right in its criticism of the Gandhi government because the past actions of the Indian government and its present actions in various parts of India deprive it of any legitimacy and moral right to comment on the situation in Sri Lanka. Of course the Sri Lanka government has also been perpetually apprehensive of the intentions of the Gandhi government with respect to the future shape of relations in the South Asian region. All this however does not address the problem that is alive in Sri Lanka. The government cannot attempt to turn the popular opinion against the interference from India as a way to solve the real problems that have pit-



Colombo residents out on the streets on July 29, during the relaxation of a curfew imposed to halt the killings of Tamils. In the background are the charred remnants of a home and shop owned by a Tamil.

the attempt by India to intervene in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka. It has brought attention to various events in India extending from Assam to Punjab and has challenged the Indian government on what posture it would adopt if other countries sought to comment on the situation in these Indian states. Also the Sri Lankan government has brought attention to the action of the Indian government in 1971 when it provided material assistance to the government led by Sirimavo Ban-

ted the Tamil minorities against the Sinhala majority.

The government has banned three political parties claiming that they are responsible for fuelling violence in the Tamil North. The Moscow backed Communist Party of Sri Lanka, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party and the JVP have been made illegal organizations. That this action would not solve any problem is not

continued on page 8



## CIVIL LIBERTIES

# Police Attack on Conference of Landless

Our Special Correspondent

How brutal can the police be especially when it has the support of officials? What might be the ultimate result if a civil administrative officer, stars beating some dozens of unarmed poor peasants and activists and then leaves the rest of the job to a contingent of 100 or so armed policemen under his control? A recent incident in Bihar has provided with at least one answer: the cops will end up with their canes broken and rifle butts smeared with blood.

Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samity (Bihar), a peasant-based organization, having considerable following among the landless peasants in some districts of Bihar was to hold its 2nd conference on May 17-18 at Maruah village of Jehanabad subdivision in Gaya district. The venue of the conference was named "Shaheed Lakhon Swadeshi Nagar" after two dalits killed by Rajpur landlords of Seonani in August last year. In late April, MKSS applied to appropriate authorities for permission to hold the conference. On May 4, when a representative of MKSS met the Sub-divisional Officer of Jehanabad, he said, "we have received your application. Well, you go ahead. We also would be present there." The organization took it as a verbal permission to hold the conference.

### POLICE RAIDS PRIOR TO

#### CONFERENCE

On May 8, as if to break the prevailing calm, police raided Patariah, a village near the conference venue, killed a landless laborer Pradip Bind and arrested 17 others alleging them to be die-hard extremists. This came as a stunning surprise to villagers (see the accompanying story on Pradip Bind).

On May 13, police jeeps started patrolling the rural areas around Jehanabad declaring through megaphones the promulgation of Sec. 144 (which prohibits the association of 4 or more persons in public places) throughout Jehanabad subdivision until further notice.

On May 15, police raided Sukulchak, another village near the conference site, rounded 2 persons and smashed chullahs (stoves) set for the conference meals.

On May 16, just the day before the conference was to start, the authorities installed 4 new camps in 4 vil-

lages surrounding the conference site; there were 2 police camps already set in the nearby area.

All this was enough to confuse the organizers. But still, taking the SDO's "verbal permission" in good faith and believing that a closed door conference - as distinct from an open public meeting - did not come under the purview of Sec. 144, they went ahead with their plans.

### CONFERENCE DAYS

On May 17, things happened like this. Police plugged not only the main entries from Jehanabad town to Maruah village but also virtually cordoned the conference site. Around 8 AM, some 100 or so supporters and activists of MKSS were approaching the conference site from different directions. First, a batch of 32, mostly outstation delegates, was intercepted by an armed police party some hundred strong. The Circle Officer Ajay Narain, who had a humiliating encounter with MKSS supporters 2 years ago for an alleged corruption charge, lashed out unprovokedly with his cane at these delegates-abusing them in the filthiest of language. And then, taking the cue from their boss, the cops banged into activity. Amidst groans and yells, canes and rifle-butts went up and down, up and down, and again up and down until the cops had all their canes broken and all those 32 lied flat on the ground strewn with satchels, sandals, banners and posters. Inderdeo Singh, one of these victims, later stressed that there was none who escaped blood-oozing injuries.

The police contingent then moved to another spot some hundreds of yards away to treat another batch of about 50 people. Before moving, they did not forget to empty the injured persons' pockets and replenish their arsenal by pulling out bamboo poles from the landlesses' hutments at nearby Sukulchak village.

This second batch was comprised mostly of local supporters of MKSS who were to get the stage set for the conference. They had the electricians, the decorators' men and other oddments like generator set, electrical and audio equipment etc., with them (along with the conference, two day cultural programme was also planned). They were meted out the

same treatment as that to the first batch. Children and women were not spared, not even the electricians or decorators' men who had nothing to do with MKSS.

At this point, the landless women of nearby Kurauna village got desperate. They started brickbating the police, making them lie down and cock their rifles. Although the women did not persist in the act, nevertheless, this allowed some less injured ones to run.

Around 10 AM, when the operation was more or less over, the SDO arrived in a jeep, took stock of the situation and went back assured. At this point, as two news reporters reached the spot, the CO got furious at them. He tried his best to threaten them away. But thanks to their doggedness, the incident got some coverage in both the local and national press. To the Express News Service reporter, the CO said, "You two should not have come. The policemen could have beaten you also. It will be better you return to Jehanabad. We will give all the details there." The Indian Express reporter also heard the police inspector talk to his junior at Bhagwanpur village over the wireless, "Do not allow them to gather. Use force, lathis, anything to disperse them." According to the Indian Express reporter, Jitendra Kumar Mallick, who identified himself as a journalist working for a Patna weekly, was also beaten up and the CO did not allow the reporter to talk to Mallick. He also saw a police inspector shout at Jatin Kumar, a teacher whose left hand was fractured, "You should be shot."

### EVEN CHILDREN AND WOMEN NOT SPARED

Some 100 persons including women and children were beaten of whom about 50 sustained serious injuries. Jyotirmoy Roy (a teacher from Dhanbad), Arjun Chaudhry (a landless laborer of Patariah village), Triveni Singh (a farmer from Aurangabad) and several others received serious fractures. A woman landless laborer from Rohtas district, Nakoor Devi, had her legs severely bruised. The police rounded up 78 persons, huddled them into 2 trailer tractors and deported them to Jehanabad police station. Some severely injured ones who were unable to move were virtually thrown into the trailers, not to speak of their painful journey being tossed up and down all along.

The arbitrariness and whimsey with which they were beaten remains all the more striking. They were beaten for no reason and then again, for every reason. If one could not sit in the trailer for pain and remained standing, was beaten, and so also one who lied flat on the trailer for allegedly occupying greater space. If

continued on page 9

## Supreme Court Wants Lifers to be Released after 14 Years

Prior to December 1978, when an amendment to the criminal penal code was passed, a life convict was released on completing 14 years in jail as a matter of course and earlier for good behavior, etc. With the amendment, life sentence came to be treated as sentence for life literally. Only at the end of the 14th year would the convict's case come up for review before the advisory board. But the Supreme Court pronounced recently that the amendment was not retroactive so that those convicted before December 18, 1978, would be entitled for release on the basis of remission schemes as framed by different states.

The decision has apparently not been implemented by state governments. On May 3, the Supreme Court directed the UP government to immediately consider the release of 146 prisoners who have already served 14 years in various jails in the state.

In Tamil Nadu, K Thiagarajan, a life-convict of Tiruchi Central Prison, has filed a writ petition charging that the state has not implemented the Supreme Court decision. According to his affidavit filed in Madras High Court, there are at least 15 prisoners in Tamil Nadu convicted before December 1978 entitled for release as per the Supreme Court judgment and recommended for release by the advisory boards but refused release by the state government.

## 5 Adivasis Flogged in Bihar

Five Adivasis were reportedly publicly flogged on June 7 in the market of Gua in the mining areas of Singhbhum, Bihar, and one of them, Vedar Nag Munga, died of injuries while being flogged. The Adivasis were tied by ropes behind a police jeep and dragged over 300 feet before being hung by their feet on a beam and put across two poles. They were leading a peaceful agitation demanding more jobs for adivasis in government services in accordance with promises the government had made.

General Secretary of the United Mineral Workers' Union PC Mazoomdar sent a letter dated June 11 to the Union Home Minister PC Sethi describing the flogging incident. According to the letter, the five adivasis had made several efforts to meet certain officials of the Indian Iron and Steel Company for a job; instead, they were rounded up by the DSP police Deepak Varma who also drove the jeep while dragging the adivasis.

continued on page 9

## An Appeal for Funds for a Book on Naxalite Martyrs

Deep Singh

During the seventies, Indian government killed thousands of Naxalites using different methods. In Punjab, during the Janata government, a commission headed by the retired Justice VM Tarkunde and which had included journalist Kuldeep Nayar and advocate Dara Singh, talked to the people in areas where Naxalites had been killed by the police under the guise of the so called encounters. The Commission's report had concluded that the government and police reports on Naxalites and their killings were either false or did not have any basis. For instance, a Session judge in Jullundur had declared the encounter story of the police with Juginder Singh of Jind and Darshan Singh of Dusanjha in which Joginder was killed and Darshan lost his leg as fake; the judge asked to charge the police officers involved in the false encounter.

Instead of being convicted and punished, police officers and bureaucrats responsible for killings of Naxalites

have been promoted and rewarded in Punjab. When the Punjab government was asked in 1979 to act on the findings of the Tarkunde Commission, the government dismissed the demand by calling the Commission private and promised that an government inquiry would be constituted. The report of the duly government appointed Gurdev Commission has also been thrown into the waste basket. Such reports are considered by the cohorts of Zail Singhs and Badals as a threat to their power.

That Bhagat Singh was hanged by the Britishers with Gandhi's approval is not hidden from anyone. Present rulers have been clamouring that they struggled with Bhagat Singhs to get freedom in 1947; they have been using Bhagat Singh and other martyrs' names to portray the rosy picture that we have been free since 1947. But the new Bhagat Singhs and other martyrs who have been struggling to realize the unfinished dreams of Bhagat Singh are being coldbloodedly killed and

their killers are being made ministers. How can the present government bring to the people the ideals, wishes and lives of these new Bhagat Singhs? Who would popularize what Naxalite martyrs stood for? Not, the conventional media. If they start doing so, who would protect Tatas, Birlas and other 75-80 big families and American and Russian governments who have been plundering common people of India?

Conspiracies are at present being hatched and plans are being made to create rift among the common people on communal grounds so that the plunder continues. Naxalites are being falsely blamed for creating communal tensions; this is another plot to kill Naxalites. Indira Gandhi shed crocodile tears at the recent murders of Prithipal Singh and DIG Atwal, but is she interested in telling the public who killed the students of Punjab Agriculture University. The murderers of Prithipal Singh Randhawa are still roaming scot-free and they are not to be touched by the government.

Progressive newspapers, magazines and organizations in Punjab have attempted to inform people about these events. Some of these newspapers and organizations are planning to compile information about such events in the past and other data in the form of a book. Financial assistance is needed for this project. Those involved in people's struggle have to be supported by common people's money. Those who have honestly and sincerely struggled for people's cause have been supported in the past and must continue to be supported. Isn't this our duty that we try to bring to the people the life stories and ideals of all those who gave their lives for the welfare of common people? Please help us in whatever way possible in this project.

For further information, please call me at (416)-745-0796 or write: Deep Singh, P.O. Box 1135, Stn. "B", Weston, Ontario, Canada.



## Double Digit Inflation

The wholesale price index and consumer price index have spiralled upwards for the past several months. Further, there isn't any sign that the rise is being checked. By the first week of May, the wholesale price index had increased by 9% and the increase now is considered to be in double digits. From January 1, it has increased from 287 to 308 by July 1 in 6 months, which is more than 15% annual increase (base year 1970-71=100).

The Consumer Price Index, which is a better guide of inflation, had reached the record level of 462 by the end of March this year in comparison with 423 in March last year. The rise has continued and the annual rate measured by this index has also crossed 10%. Latest data was not available.

## Foreign Debt Over Rs 200 Billion

Given the amount of debt India has from foreign sources as of March 31, 1982, it will be paying around Rs 10 billion every year as debt service for at least the next 10 years towards principal and interest. Total debt liability was around Rs 210 billion in 1982, which includes all government, non-government, commercial and IMF loans. Approximately Rs 9.2 billion are provided in the 1983-84 budget towards repayment of principal and interest. Ratio of debt service to export earnings for India has been around 11% for the last 5 years.

Most of the loans taken by the government in the past has been the so called soft loans carrying a lower interest rate and with payment distributed over a longer period starting after 5-10 years. However, recent loans have been carrying higher interest rates with payments distributed over relatively shorter periods.

## Too Many Babies Are Born to Die

MONI NAG

In Mark Tully's controversial documentary film on India, shown on BBC in November last, Ela Bhatt, founder of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) at Ahmedabad, is asked what she thought of the government's family planning program. "I do not believe in family planning the way they are thinking," she flares up. "Who are they to decide or to control either how many children I must have or the poor in the village should have?" She pauses, takes a deep breath, and adds, "The biggest problem is infant mortality. Unless I am sure that my child, born today, is going to survive, I cannot, I will not follow any family planning practice."

### SHARP CONTRASTS

Ela Bhatt was saying, in effect, that if more infants could be kept alive in India, fewer babies would be born. This simple statement is borne out in a host of demographic research in India and elsewhere. Take Kerala and Uttar Pradesh for sharp contrasts. A study made by the office of the Registrar-General of India in 1978 shows that a married woman in Kerala gives birth, on the average, to 4.8 children, and her counterpart in UP to 6.6 children. One reason why fewer babies are born in Kerala is that fewer babies die. The infant

continued on page 11

## Over 300 Million Below the Poverty Line

More than 300 million people in India, which is more than 48% of the population, are currently living below the poverty line. This was reported to the Lok Sabha by the Minister of Food and Civil Supplies Bhagwat Jha Azad. Tripura had the highest percentage of people under the poverty line, approximately 60%, whereas Punjab had the least percentage, around 15% people living below the poverty line.

The poverty line is determined by calculating the amount of money needed to buy food for minimum caloric intake for survival and does not include money needed for shelter,

clothing, health or education. Different estimates of the poverty line often lead to different estimates of number of poor people resulting in debate among economists. Even the government has given different figures on different occasions. As an instance, former President Sanjiva Reddy had reported that over 80% of the people were living below the poverty line in one of his lectures before leaving office, in which he had criticized India's development process during the last 35 years. According to another estimate, among the approximately 1 billion people living in hunger all over the world, roughly 1/3 are in India.

## Child Labor in Tamil Nadu

Roli Varma

The match and fireworks industries in and around Sivakasi town in Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu employ more than 45,000 children out of total 100,000 workers. It is the largest single concentration of child labour in the world. The hosiery industries of Tiruppur town in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu also shares similar characteristics with Sivakasi- 1/3 of the approximately 30,000 hosiery workers are children. Girls outnumber boys 3 to 1. These children are between 3 1/2 to 15 years old. Forgoing school and play, children work 12 hours a day in unhygienic conditions to earn just Rs 2 to 4 a day, below the statutory minimum wage. This is despite the fact that the Factory Act of 1948 forbids employing children below 14. Further, it is illegal to make even healthy children between 14 and 18 to work for more than 4 1/2 hours.

unemployment and underemployment, children are forced to work at a paltry wage for long hours. Most of them are paid on a piece rate basis. At this small age, instead of being taken care of, they end up working like animals to ensure maximum output. Most of kids were found to be frail, malnourished and anaemic. Despite so much work, they earn between Rs 2 to 5 a day. They are underpaid because there are no records kept by the employers; children cannot force the employers to do so as hiring children is an illegal activity. In Tiruppur, children are made to work free for 4 to 6 months under the so called apprenticeship to qualify for a daily wage.

### INHUMAN WORKING CONDITIONS

Although the Factories Act requires an employers to set at least 500 cubic feet of work space to every worker to forestall overcrowding, provide



Tiruppur children on the way to their factories (left) and hard at work:

**15 HOUR WORK DAY BRINGS RS 4** In Sivakasi, the children mostly belonging to the neighboring villages either work in small cottage-units in their own villages or in the factories. There is an organized system to arrange for their transport from the neighboring villages and to bring them to the factory sites. Children are woken up by their parents or family members between 3 and 5 AM every morning to be packed into factory buses.

According to a UNICEF study that surveyed 33 buses in Sivakasi, an average bus goes to about 20 villages near Sivakasi, travelling 3 to 20 miles and carrying approximately 150 children each. Children are dropped back to their respective villages between 6 and 9 PM. The children who have worked for 12 hours are away from their homes for over 15 hours.

The conditions in Tiruppur are not very different from Sivakasi. Like Sivakasi, children start their day early in the morning. However, instead of being transported to site in buses, they walk 2-3 miles to factories. After working for 10 hours, they walk back to their homes. Children are away from their home for at least 12 hours.

Children are paid below the legally fixed minimum wages though they work for hours more than prescribed by the law. Because of high rate of proper ventilation and circulation of air, hygienic drinking water, sanita-

tion facilities, and safety measures, the working conditions in these factories remain unsafe and detrimental to the mental and physical health of children.

In match and fireworks industries, children work in cramped environments with hazardous chemicals and inadequate ventilation. Place is filled with dust from the chemical powders and strong vapours causing respiratory problems. In the chemical dipping sections, fingers of children get coated with chemicals. Even minimum safety standards are not maintained.

In February 1982, for instance, 6 children died in fire in a cracker factory in Chellapathi village. In September 1981, 32 people including 6 children died in a massive explosion at the Arunachalam Fireworks. These cases were registered under the Indian Penal Code and the Explosives Act but no effective actions were taken against the employers. Minor incidents often get suppressed by the owners; only serious accidents which cannot be suppressed may have the attention of government officers. But the licences of these factories hardly get suspended; the defaulting factory is usually back into production a few days after the accident.

In hosiery industries, children work in dirty polluted places filled with lot of cotton dust in the air, giving rise to serious respiratory problems. The District Tuberculosis Centre affiliated

continued on page 7

## MRTP Liberalized

According to a central government directive, companies registered under the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act (MRTP) will not need to seek formal government clearance to establish additional capacities in industries which have been declared to be high national priority by the government. Sectors that will be exempted include fertilizers, newsprints, cement, pig iron, electronic components, alternate energy systems, computer peripherals, machine tools, machinery for chemical industry, etc.

The new exemption will be valid for 5 years. The government had earlier allowed MRTP companies exemption from seeking permission for additional capacity for establishing a 100% export house or to expand an existing one, even when it was running below capacity. However, a company must meet the requirement that 20% of the project cost is supplied by the company and debt-equity does not exceed 2 to 1.

## 2% Growth in 1982-83

According to the Central Statistical Organization, Indian economy is not expected to register a growth of more than 2% during 1982-83 implying hardly any increase in per capita income. The drop in the growth rate for the last fiscal year is attributed to the combination of drought and floods that affected large parts of the country. The agricultural production in the last fiscal year hardly showed any growth over the previous year; the government imported over 4 million tons of foodgrains from the US. According to many industrialists and economists, the industrial sector was in a crisis, with many calling the crisis a recession.

## Tax Contributions of Private Corporations Declining

A report submitted by the Public Accounts Committee in the Lok Sabha points out that the taxes collected from private corporations have consistently been lower than the estimates made in the budget from 1978-77 through 1980-81.

According to the report, this state of affairs has continued despite a steady increase in the pre-tax profits of the 20 big industrial houses. Taxable profit of the top 20 companies increased from over Rs 4 billion in 1978 to Rs 5.5 billion in 1980; despite so, the companies have paid nominal amounts in taxes. For instance, the Tata Electrical and Locomotive Company reported pre-tax profits of Rs 170 million in 1979-80 and Rs 270 million in 1980-81 but it did not pay any taxes. Other companies that did not pay any taxes included JK Synthetics, Calico, Bombay Dyeing, Modi Rubber, Mohindra Ugine despite the fact that they showed profits.

In 1981-82, 42 out of 76 high profit companies either did not pay any tax or paid very little tax. Sixty per cent of the total corporate tax collected in that year was contribution of the public sector undertakings.

## 25% are Slum Dwellers in Cities

As many as 25 million people in urban India live in slums; this was reported by the United News of India based on statistics made available by the National Building Organization. 40% of them live in big cities including Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Pune, Lucknow, Kanpur Jaipur and Nagpur. According to the projections made by the Planning Commission, the total number of people living in urban slums would be 33 millions by 1985.







## BC People Unite Against Government

Chin Banerjee

On July 7, the government of British Columbia introduced a budget and a set of 28 bills which have aroused widespread protest both in British Columbia and across Canada.

While the budget raises taxes which will affect all sections of people and introduces a series of cut-backs which will abolish assistance and services to the most needy and helpless people in the province, the thrust of the proposed legislation is to abolish human rights, the bargaining rights of labor and job security for public service employees.

The government has decided to save money in ways which will hurt all ordinary people while hitting most hard at the most needy. It has reversed the cost-sharing formula with the municipalities by which the province paid 75% of the cost of essential services. Now the municipalities will have to pay 75%. This, in combination with another change, that property tax is to be determined by actual value rather than assessed value, makes it certain that homeowners will be paying quite a bit more tax. The Cabinet is however authorized to exempt businesses from property tax.

The whole medical system has been revised to create class differences among doctors and patients. There will be doctors for the poor who operate under medicare and accept various controls from the government including where they may practice; there will be doctors for the rich who opt out of medicare; and there will be doctors for the in-between who are prepared to pay extra fees beyond what medicare will cover. Hospital user fees have also gone up.

The Alcohol and Drug Commission has been abolished. Aid to students has been cut back by 40%. Government aid to consumer complaints has been eliminated.

The budget for the Ombudsman has been cut back. The Office of Rentalsman has been eliminated along with rent control. This means that tenants may be evicted at will or face unlimited rent increases without any protection.

The Human Rights Commission and the Human Rights Branch of the Ministry of Labor have been eliminated. Their function is to be taken over by a Human Rights Council of 5 members appointed at the "pleasure" of the government.

A grant of \$50 that used to be given to disabled people who could not be employed for doing voluntary work in the community under the Community Involvement Programme has been eliminated.

The family support programme in the Ministry of Human Resources which provided care for disturbed families and children in their homes has been scrapped. Help for women suffering from depression after child birth has been eliminated.

The Motor Vehicles Inspection Programme which required every car in BC to be safety tested has been eliminated.

The elimination of these programmes has meant the loss of thousands of jobs. The entire staff of the Human Rights Branch including the Commissioner and the Director were summarily fired. Then came the turn of the workers of the Motor Vehicles Inspection Centers. The latest victims have been 600 workers at the Ministry of Human Resources. Government employees in BC are all living

in insecurity.

### ATTACK ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Possibly the most serious aspect of the BC government's budget package is its political thrust. Analysts have pointed out that most of these so called "restraint" measures have no economic benefit. For instance, spokespersons for Human Resources workers have indicated the long-term cost to society from not taking care of disturbed families and children. Obviously more children will now become wards of the court. The Director of Motor Vehicles Inspectors Branch has pointed out that raising inspection fees by 50c will make the programme self-supporting. The government however has indicated that they want to turn the job over to private business who may be allowed to charge \$50.

Charles Paris, the Human Rights Commissioner, has stated that the scrapping of the Commission has nothing to do with restraint but constitutes a philosophical attack on human rights. It is widely recognized that under the slogan of "restraint" the BC government has decided to make the poor and underprivileged pay for the welfare of the rich and that to facilitate this process, it has decided to dismantle the structure of human and democratic rights.

Two bills which make this glaringly clear are Bill 27 and Bill 3. Bill 27 abolishes the present Human Rights Code and the existing mechanism for its enforcement and substitutes a much weaker Human Rights Act and a Council which is totally dependent on the pleasure of the government. At a time when the growing racism in BC requires stronger human rights legislation and a more independent and powerful mechanism of administrators, the present move by the government is nothing less than an invitation to racist and sexist discrimination. As Charan Gill, President of BCOFR, said, the government of BC is telling all ethnic minorities that their rights are of no concern to this government.

Bill 3 says that any public sector employee may be fired without cause, without compensation and without remedy through the grievance procedure, the courts or the labor relations board. This of course means the end to any kind of job security and subjects every public sector worker, whether an auto-mechanic or a university professor, to pure whim, vendetta or political control.

### WIDESPREAD OPPOSITION

#### TO CUTS

These measures have created shock and outrage in BC. Two broad based coalitions have been formed to oppose them. The Lower Mainland Budget Coalition, consisting of various labor, church, community and political organizations and individuals, staged a massive demonstration in Vancouver on July 2-3. The demonstration attracted 35-40,000 people and was addressed by Mike Harcourt, the Mayor of Vancouver, Charan Gill of BCOFR, Father Jim Roberts, and Francis Waterline of the Vancouver Coalition of Women among others. "Human Rights are not for sale," said Hanna Jansen, the fired Director of the Human Rights Branch. Jack Munro, President of IWA, expressed an anxiety in the hearts of many when he said, "Fascism does not wear a black shirt or a brown shirt. Sometimes it means a dress shirt."

Operation Solidarity, a coalition of mainly labor groups organized by the BC Federation of Labor, brought 25,000 people to the steps of the BC

## Malicious Charge Against Raj Chouhan Dismissed

Our Vancouver Correspondent

Raj Chouhan, President of the Canadian Farmworkers Union (CFU), was found innocent by the jury in his trial for the alleged possession of a dangerous weapon at the Provincial Court of British Columbia.

The charge against Raj Chouhan rose out of the attack by the People's Front - CPC(ML) on an anti-racist demonstration organized by the BC Organization to Fight Racism (BCOFR) on October 4, 1981 at the South Memorial Park in Vancouver where a young East Indian had been

murdered by a gang of racists.

Raj was charged more than 8 months after the incident at the insistence of the People's Front. Many individuals and organizations from the community and the labor movement had protested this charge as an obvious mischievous attempt by the People's Front which also claims to have a union of farm workers, to hamper the work of the CFU by tying them up in the court.

After a 3-day trial, the charge was dismissed as unfounded.

## All Canada Sikh Convention 1983

G.K. Sandhu

The fourth All Canada Sikh Convention organized by the federation of Sikh societies of Canada was held in Ottawa on July 30-31. It focussed on contemporary issues and sikhism - religion and tradition, the main concerns of the two year old federation.

The participants came from across Canada and were from all walks of life. The chief topics discussed were sikh practices, the media, laws and rights in Canada, multiculturalizations, immigration issues and racism, which is a reality in Canada. Resolutions concerning them were passed.

Discussions on multi-culturalizations presented by students from British Columbia dealt with several points.

racial problems;  
culture preservation among youths, especially as there was lack of education on this at home, hostile environment outside the home, and lack of other educational facilities for the same;  
a lack of parent-child communication among sikh families;  
double standard in the sikh

## Restrictions on Foreign Doctors Demanded in Britain

The British Medical Association has demanded that the British government enact immigration laws restricting the employment of foreign doctors and limiting their entry into England. According to the Association, there are around 16,000 foreign doctors in England. Leaving aside doctors from European Economic Community, most of the foreign doctors are from Asia including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Philippines. Some doctors in the Association have opposed the resolution on the ground that it violates Britain's Race Relations Act of 1976.

Legislature in Victoria on July 27 to hear speaker after speaker denounce the dismantling of democracy and human rights in BC and demand the withdrawal of the budget and the legislations. Art Kube, President of the BC Federation of Labor, warned the government that they were "embarking on a very dangerous game of brinkmanship which can throw the province into 'industrial relations chaos.'" A spokesman for the coalition of churches condemned the government for acting against the principles of Christianity. Grace Hartman, National President of CUPE, said, "The only ones safe in British Columbia are corporations and the rich." She added, "Before this fight is over, we may find ourselves in a position where we have to resort to civil disobedience."

Another rally was set for August 10 in Vancouver at the Empire Stadium.

communities in matters of equal rights for men and women, and parental religious practices;  
need for educational and support services, i.e., youth centers, sikh camps, language schools.

The students offered concrete support in assisting the community, preserve its cultural heritage. One such step was collaborating with the Asian Studies Department of the University of British Columbia in offering elementary and advanced Punjabi language courses with matching grants from the government.

Other speakers included human rights lawyer, Mark Berlin, George Imai, a leader of the Japanese community, Darshan Singh Arora. Imai remarked on Japanese-Canadian becoming "bananas," yellow on the outside and white on the inside. They were attempting total assimilation in the Canadian mosaic without retaining any cultural identity of their own. Berlin cited cases of racial discrimination. Very articulate, Mr. C.S. Gill spoke philosophically as well as practically on contemporary issues of racism, discrimination against minorities including women and continued reduction of fund allocation to human rights department across Canada.

It was resolved that more aggressive and organized approaches be taken by sikh and other organizations in presenting their cases in order to fight systematic discrimination in Canadian society. Proposals included review of school text books to include minority names (rather than Jim and Mary only), and life styles of different cultures to educate future generations. The delegates also resolved to send telegrams of protest regarding racial discrimination and the British Columbian government's crushing of its human rights department, to the appropriate bodies.

## Indian Poet Awarded Fellowship

Attipat Krishnaswami Ramanujan, poet and translator of several Kannada and Tamil works, was named one of the 14 persons to receive a 5-year fellowship from the MacArthur Foundation. Ramanujan who is in the South Asian Language department and on the Committee of Social thought at the University of Chicago, will receive \$ 260,000 which he is free to utilize the way he wishes to pursue his interests.

Among translations to English done by Ramanujan, is a Kannada novel Samskara by UR Ananthmurthy on which a Kannada movie with the same name was made. Ramanujan plans to translate another story by Ananthmurthy Ghattashradha which was also made into a successful film by Girish Karasvalli.

Last year, MacArthur foundation awarded author and journalist Ved Mehta with a similar fellowship.



## Rape Victim

continued from page 1

### PIVOTAL ROLE OF WOMEN'S GROUPS - MATHURA CASE

In the common law world, the victim in a rape case is treated as an accomplice with the accused in the affair, and feminists are agitating this discrimination in the US, England and Australia. The recent decision in India is a victory for the women's movement there, and a reflection of the "pivotal role that women's organizations have played in bringing about this change in attitude," said Kapila Hingorani, advocate, Supreme Court. "In the Mathura case, when I was going to file a review petition on behalf of 4 women's organizations, I was told to take the matter to the Boat Club (a popular destination for demonstrations in Delhi) and not bring it to the Supreme Court. Now the Supreme Court itself has come out with a judgement supporting our cause."

The Mathura Rape case became a rallying point for women's groups in India in 1977, and the debate regarding the discriminating laws governing rape was taken up. In this case, the Supreme Court had acquitted two constables convicted for rape by the Bombay High Court. Tukaram and Ganpat were charged with raping Mathura, a minor, in a police station in Desai gang, Chandrapur district, Maharashtra. By letting them off, the Supreme Court inferred consent on Mathura's part and the country's highest judicial office made itself a subject of controversy. Women's organizations had demanded a reopening of the Mathura case.

As a result of the ensuing public debate, the government referred the question to a Law Commission who published a report, subsequent to which the Criminal Law Amendment Bill was introduced in Parliament in 1980, to amend the rape laws. However the Bill has been called a wash-out designed merely to show that the government is sensitive to women's problems and ignored almost all the major recommendations of the Law Commission:

- (1) The bill is vague about the age of consent even though the Law Commission sets it at 18 years.
- (2) The bill does not mention the need for immediate medical check-up.
- (3) The bill makes no mention of the fact that the commission has recommended that the victim should be interrogated at home by a police woman.
- (4) The bill does not consider rape under economic duress.

### SUPREME COURT AHEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT

Pramil Dandavate, MP (Janata) said, "The Joint Parliamentary Committee on amendment of rape laws recommended that only in cases of custodial rape should the onus of proof be shifted on the accused. Therefore I feel by this judgement the Supreme

### DEATH SENTENCES FOR DOWRY MURDERERS

One of the major problems in laying charges against the accused in cases of bride burnings is the lack of witnesses and the lack of evidence. However in the Sudha case, there were several factors which helped to bring the criminals to justice, most important being the timely action of neighborhood witnesses (see accompanying article).

"The Supreme Court has made it quite difficult to award death sentences, but this murder is so revolting that it fulfills all the conditions," Aggarwal said. It ranks among the rarest cases of murder and rarest among the rare, so far as the category of bride-burning cases is

## Neighbors Testimony Helps to Catch Sudha's Murderers

Sudha, who was from Calcutta got married to Lakshman Kumar, of Delhi, in February 1980. She was about to deliver a child in about a week's time when she died of severe burns on December 1, 1980 at St. Stephens Hospital in Delhi.

Lakshman Kumar, his mother, Shakuntala Devi, and his brother, Subhash Chander, poured kerosene oil on her and set her alight in the backyard of their home. Subhash Chander bolted the back door and stood against it to prevent Sudha from breaking it down and escaping while Lakshman and his mother watched from the back window. Sudha's screams for help brought



Sudha (left) and Lakshman Kumar (second from left), Shakuntala Devi and Subhash Chander flanked by policemen: just punishment

neighbors Jaspal Singh Oberoi, Tarsem Jain, Satish Chopra and Ishwari Devi to the scene. When they found the front door locked, they broke it down and rescued Sudha. They wrapped her in a blanket, called the flying squad and put her in a taxi that some other neighbors had called. Sudha pointed to her husband and in-laws and said "These people poured kerosene over me and burnt me."

Before anyone could take a seat in the taxi the accused got in and drove away. Some suspicious neighbours

concerned, which is assuming menacing proportions these days," he added. "It was pre-planned ... and ruthlessly executed. I say it was diabolical and barbaric. They were not only killing an innocent young woman in this case, but a pregnant woman at that. They were putting to death a fully grown yet unborn child whose birth would take place in less than a week's time."

### NEED FOR SPECIAL COURTS

#### CITED

In an exclusive interview with WEEKEND REVIEW, Judge Aggarwal said "I have described the police officer and Dr. Joseph as wolves masquerading in the uniform of police and doctor." In conclusion, "I personally feel that special courts should be set up to deal with the cases of bride burning in order to avoid the delay in administration of justice. Furthermore I feel that the officer in charge of the flying squad should be a person of proven integrity. Whenever a dying declaration is recorded, it should be done in the presence of two doctors - a male and a female - and a relative of the victim. Once this is done, it would become easy to administer justice in cases like these which have to be dealt with firmness and caution."

Yet, he knows that, in the long run his recent ruling will do little to change the system. "It will take time and a huge effort," he said. "We must spread the word throughout this city that the friends and neighbors of women in this situation can play an active role in preventing this or at least ensuring the offenders are punished."

Court has gone a step ahead of the government. Secondly, it proves that

tried to follow on scooters but lost the accused who went to the house of Gayatri Devi, Sudha's elder sister, and told her that Sudha had accidentally caught fire. Gayatri and her husband went with them to St. Stephen's hospital where Sudha had registered for delivery. Sudha lived for nine hours. She had suffered burns on 70% of her body. Gayatri was present at the hospital till 12:30 and till then nobody had come to record Sudha's statement.

### "A LOT OF FOUL PLAY"



The next day when the neighbors found out that Sudha, in her dying declaration, had stated that her death was due to an accident, they suspected foul play. "When she left for the hospital, she was accusing members of her family of setting her on fire - how did her statement change so drastically, and it was this question that led us to register a case," said Tarsem Jain.

"There was a lot of foul play because the sub-inspector (Sukhvinder Singh) and a senior surgeon (Dr. J. Joseph of St. Stephens Hospital) colluded

with the family to fabricate what they insisted was Sudha's statement," Judge Aggarwal said. It was instances like Sudha's thumb-printed dying declaration with four different thumb prints (when her skin was so burnt she could have no finger prints), the fact that the gas cylinder was full and there was no need to use a kerosene stove especially by a woman who was in an advanced stage of pregnancy and for whom squatting would have been difficult, and the fact that all her burnt clothes reeked of the smell of kerosene that aroused the suspicions of Judge Aggarwal, when the case of People vs. Shakuntala Kumar,

Subhash Kumar and Lakshman Kumar came up before him. (See accompanying article for judgement).

The motive for the murder was monetary gain. When Sudha's lower middle class family in Calcutta could not fork over more than the Rs 75,000 they already had spent on the wedding and the gifts in cash and kind, her in-laws planned her death before the baby was born, as a child would prove an encumbrance on the future marital prospects of Lakshman Kumar.

## Devdasi System: Prostitution with Religious Sanctions

ROLI VARMA

The occasion was the Magha Poornima festival in Belgaum in Karnataka. A young girl wearing only a skirt of neem twigs and leaves and holding a neem twig between her teeth walked slowly down the Belgaum-Saundatti highway. At some distance, a caravan of about 50 bullocks carts was following her. After her 10-mile walk, she took a dip in the Malaprabha river and walked further to the Yellamma temple at Saundatti making her way to the dedication ceremony.

She is Satavva, the eldest daughter of Dondappa, an agricultural worker from Ullagaddi Dhanapur, a small hamlet on the Belgaum-Pune high-

way. Twenty-year old Satavva was engaged to be married, when a relative approached the family that the call of the goddess Yellamma had come for her. First, the family ignored the message. A few weeks later, Satavva developed a skin infection which scared the family. They thought that their rejection to the goddess's command had led to the skin infection. They broke her engagement and dedicated her to the Yellamma.

This year, in the Magha Poornima festival, which is held in January, 450,000 devotees visited the Yellamma temple. An estimated 4,500 of the visitors were dedicated to the goddess. In a temple in the Matangi

continued on page 7

people's opinion expressed in an organized way helped to change the attitude of the judges. Thirdly, corroborative evidence is not possible because generally the woman does not complain immediately, she complains only after the trauma is over. By the time she goes for a medical examination, she has had a bath and changed her clothes, and thus the evidence is destroyed. The court has recognized the fact."

Nina Kapoor, a feminist activist in Delhi is in full agreement with the judgement. "We have been saying for long that given the adverse social environment a woman finds herself in India, her statement should be taken as foolproof evidence. Because of the threat of reprisal from their own male relatives and the external world, the burden of social stigma, and the humiliation faced at the

hands of the police and in court, most of them withdraw the complaints. In this kind of framework, a woman's word ought to be enough, and speedy judgement should be given."

Yet, critics of the Supreme Court judgement attacked it on the ground that it took away the cardinal rule of criminal jurisprudence that the accused shall be given the benefit of doubt. CP Pandey, advocate of the Supreme Court said that a woman may charge a man with rape for reasons of revenge. Kapila Hingorani said this was possible but "The rules should change as per the demands of justice." She hoped that the judges would be able to do justice, keeping in view all the facts that would be brought before them from case to case.



## Devdasi System:

continued from page 8

hillock which overlooks the Yellamma temple, 15 to 20 girls are dedicated every month. The Padappa temple, about 3 miles from Ramdurg, south of Belgaum and Tikota temple in Bijapur district have also seen many such dedication ceremonies. A young girl dedicated in such ceremonies is called a devadasi (maid-servant of god). What do the devadasis do?

According to a report in the Indian Express (March 8), approximately 3000 girls from the Belgaum district get transported to the brothels of Bombay and Pune after the ritual of a dedication ceremony. Another report in the Times of India (November 30) revealed that most of the devadasis end up in the "red light area", the officially sanctioned flesh trade centre, of Bombay; more than one third of the prostitutes in Bombay's cheapest brothels were devadasis; almost 75% of them were barely 14 years old or even younger when they took to the profession.

By the devadasi system, young girls are discarded by the family and dedicated to Hindu temples. These girls become the property of the temples who ought to perform various duties including dancing and providing sex to the priests and other Hindu custodians of the temples. The majority of devadasis do not live around the temples. Once a devadasi has attained puberty, she would be given to a patron who would keep her as concubine as long as he would want to. Today most of the devadasis end up in brothels because there are not enough patrons to go around. The devadasi system has become an organized way of supplying young girls for prostitution. In Kangala village on the Bangalore-Pune highway, for instance, an old man has been allegedly supplying 300 girls every year from his village, which has a population of only 4,000-4,500, to his son in Bombay who takes care of the business at the other end.

This system of prostitution covered and protected by the Hindu religion continues to be practiced since these devadasis are supposedly performing an obligatory, sacred duty. The religious beliefs have given respectability to this kind of prostitution. The legislation banning the devadasi system in Karnataka, for instance, has only simplified the rituals. Whereas the earlier ceremonies would be time consuming, conducted with elaborate rituals, now the ceremony is done in less than an hour in "safe places." The ceremonies are not conducted near the temples or where the pujaris (priest) live, but in the safety of one of the empty huts on the hill. Sometimes, the ceremonies could be conducted by the jogitis in 5 or 10 minutes with a coconut representing the idol. A ceremony conducted by a pujari can cost between Rs.500 to Rs.1000. The money which flows from the procurers or agents of the girls is too lucrative for any one to ignore.

These practices cover all the communities, the upper and lower castes, the Muslims and the Maratha brahmins but the majority of them are from the lower castes and untouchables. But what is shared by them all is the wretched poverty and helplessness. The fear of many of incurring the wrath of the goddess pushes the family to dedicate the daughter.

The government has hardly made any attempts to help out the victims of the devadasi system. Earlier, the government had denied the existence of devadasi system. But due to the efforts of the Joint Women's Programme (JWP) headed by Jyotsna Chatterji and various other organizations, the Karnataka government was forced to come out with a legislation to curb this system of prostitution. The JWP had conducted an investigation on the northern borders of Karnataka and parts of Maharashtra and produced a book and a film on the devadasi system.

## Dowry Deaths

Reports of bride burning and dowry deaths continue to pour in from New Delhi and other parts of India. On July 7, 27 year old Shashibala was burnt to death in a south Delhi house. Shashibala had been married to a contractor since September 1975 and according to her relatives, she had been harassed by her in-laws since the time of her marriage who demanded more money, jewellery, other gifts at all festivals and whenever it pleased them. Shashibala's body was found in the bathroom by neighbours who burst into the house after they saw smoke coming out of the house. Shashibala's mother-in-law and two children were inside the house.

In another incident, a free-lance journalist Pawan Jain was arrested in north Delhi on charges of attempting to kill his young wife. Pawan Jain had been demanding that his wife Suneeta get Rs 10000 from her parents. The husband and wife allegedly had an argument on July 7 over this; when Suneeta refused to comply with her husband's demands, Pawan Jain allegedly picked up a bottle of kerosene oil and set fire to her clothes. Suneeta was rescued by her landlady and some neighbours who arrived at her house on hearing her screams.

## Child Labor

continued from page 3

### WHY ARE CHILDREN FORCED

#### TO WORK?

to the District Medical Hospital in Tiruppur, for instance, examined 10 new cases of children every day last year; this figure has risen by 50% this year, 15 new child patients every day. The total number of tuberculosis cases treated in February 1981 was 200. In February 1983, the number had increased to 1,542. Instead of taking any action to ensure proper working conditions in the factories, Tamil Nadu Government has responded to this alarming increase of tuberculosis incidents by sanctioning a 50-bed hospital for the town.

Economic conditions of Sivakasi and Tiruppur area force parents to send even their 5 year olds to work. People are poor. Even when some of them do own small pieces of land, they are unable to depend completely on it for livelihood. Both areas are drought-prone and the government has made no efforts to develop them. Peasants do not get water for more than 4 months a year. Land is not

The Karnataka law prohibits the devadasi system and provides for a 3 year jail and fine for those who abet the crime. But like many other laws prohibiting dowry, untouchability, etc, it remains on the paper. Last year, the Karnataka government announced some reliefs and rehabilitation schemes. But the rules framed for the implementation of the scheme specify that no more than 3 destitute women in each taluk can avail of the loan. No attempt has been made to get jobs to the victims of devadasi system, train or educate their children. The devadasis continue to remain in the hands of their agents.

Imran Qureshi wrote in the Indian Express that the Nipani village has made some success where the Tobacco Sanghatana led by Subhash Joshi has successfully organized 100 devadasis among the tobacco workers and weaned them away from prostitution by securing better wages for them. The JWP and the Karnataka Dalit Action Committee have also been involved in organizing the devadasis. Though the efforts of organizing devadasis have not achieved much success yet, it is such efforts that produce, as Rewabai Yamanavva Kamble, the president of the Pune Devadasi Sanghatans, said, "a ray of hope amidst despair."

Based on reports in the Indian Express and Dalit Voice

## Shanti Debi of Purba Lohanipur

PRADIP SEN

[The following interview with an activist in Patna could not go with the article on Patna slums few months ago for lack of space.]

--Our wealth is the poor people. That is why we fight so hard. We have nothing to lose. You look around, this is our world. What do we have to lose? I have been an organizer in the jhuggies (huts) right from the beginning. So I know something about who are our enemies. On May 5 (last year), Ramesh Singh came with his personal army and police and removed the signboard of our sangh. We collected the women and children immediately and went to the thana (police station). We asked the cops why he was being allowed to do this. I asked why would they not stop Ramesh Singh from destroying the jhuggies? Because we are poor people, we have no rights? We started a dharna (sit-in) outside the thana. For 15 days, 10-15 people (half men, half women) at a time would sit down outside with the banner of the Jhuggi-Jhopri Bashi Sangh. We would give slogans "Police julum nahin chalegi" (stop police harassment) and "Jis zamin par hum basha

gherey hain, woh zamin hamara hi" (where we have built our houses, the land belongs to us).

--What happened after the dharna was started?

--Fifteen days after we started the dharna, Ramesh Singh came back with his goondas around 12 noon. He came and immediately started breaking down some of our huts. The DSP soon arrived. We had already organized ourselves and had begun resisting the goondas. When I saw the DSP, I grabbed hold of the son-of-a-bitch and slapped him hard. I asked him - Why did he attack poor people? Immediately a clash started.

--How long did it go on?

--About 2 hours. We fought with whatever we had in our hands. But finally 15 goondas jumped on me and started beating me up with rods.

--Where was Ramesh at this point?

--Oh, he was asking the police why they were not opening fire. The cops were refusing because they said they will not fire on women and children. I was finally dragged to the thana along with 3 other women and there continued on page 12

productive.

Factory owners prefer child labor to adult labor despite millions of unemployed adults willing to take up any work because children are easy to get exploited. The children cannot demand anything from the owners. They cannot complain to the legal authorities either because they are afraid of losing their job because of illegality of child labor. They cannot form union or do any sort of collective bargaining for fixed minimum wage and better working conditions. As one owner puts it, "we prefer child workers. They work faster, work longer hours and are more dependable."

Children continue to get exploited while their labour is generating a handsome revenue to the factory owners. More than 50% of matches and 75% of fireworks of India are produced in and around Sivakasi generating revenue worth Rs 1,200 million per year for matches and Rs 180-200 million for fireworks. Over 1200 factories in Tiruppur accounts for half of all cotton hosiery produced in the country, with an annual turnover of Rs 900 million and export turnover of Rs 280 million.

### GOVT'S ATTITUDE:

#### INDIFFERENCE

The situation about child labour has been so alarming that the government was forced to set up few commissions to inquire about child labour. A one-man commission under Harbans Singh investigated the problems of child labour in various factories and industries in Ramanathapuram district in 1976. In 1979, the Ministry of Labour appointed a committee chaired by MS Gurupadaswamy to investigate the causes relating to the existence of child labour. While surveying the nature of child labour all over India, the committee made special reference to Tamil Nadu. Both commissions came to conclusions similar to those outlined above and admitted that the administrative authorities have no powers to suspend licences of a factory violating the law which conveniently ensures that no effective steps are taken to alleviate the inhuman conditions.

Harbans Singh's report was not even made public; nor the government paid any attention to the problems discussed in the report. Gurupadaswamy Commission's report made several recommendations such as the removal of poverty and unemployment, ensuring minimum wages, a meaningful educational policy whereby the curriculum is related to vocational training, medical and

health support, ensuring higher nutrition levels, housing facilities, recreation and cultural activities and protection from health hazards in addition to have the will to enforce the existing legislation in order to lessen the exploitation of children in the country. Again, the government has not given any serious attention to these recommendations.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) had singled out India in 1975 as having the largest number of child workers among all nations. The ILO estimated the number of child workers between 10 and 14 years in India at 15.1 million out of a world total of 54.7 million; this was out of an estimated child population of 75.7 million in India of the same age group, which meant that 1 out of every 5 children between 10 and 14 worked. According to the National Sample Survey, 16.25 million children were part of labour force in 1978, 14.60 million worked in rural area and 1.61 in urban area. The actual figure of child labour is far higher than the official estimates as BB Bhagat's report in The Indian Express (May 20, '83) pointed out.

Whatever is the magnitude of child labour, it exposes the Indian government which keeps clamouring about child welfare and universal free primary education. A child who is forced to work for 10 to 12 hours a day is denied of childhood, fair physical and mental development.

What is the solution to this acute social problem? Recently, the Tamil Nadu government is reported to have decided to bring in legislation to "stipulate the age limit." Because of the existing nature of economic development and the distributional patterns, posing the issue in terms of age limit seems misplaced. The root of child labour is poverty. Most of the working children come from very poor families and supplement family earnings. Under the present socio-economic situation that forces children to work, the children would be forced to work legally or illegally as long as the root cause, the poverty and hunger are not dealt with. Legal prohibition only increases children exploitation and defencelessness. At present, it seems more effective to make child labor legal and focus on how the exploitation of children can be lessened through unionizing and child labour laws. Various measures should be enforced so children could work as human beings, taking into consideration to their physical capabilities.

Based on reports in E P & W and India Today



## One Year of a Struggle - Bombay Textile Strike

On January 18, 1983, the strike by over 250,000 textile workers of Bombay completed one year. In sheer magnitude of numbers and of duration, the strike becomes the longest and the most tenacious struggle in the history of trade union movement in India. Yet many people, even within India, are unaware of the strike and repression it is facing.

Workers in Bombay's 62 textile mills number a little over 250,000. They constitute 20% of the total textile workers in India and 4.5% of all the workers engaged in the manufacturing sector in the country. They are among the lowest paid in the organized sector with an average income of just Rs. 480 per month.

Of the 250,000 workers, only about 160,00 are permanent; 30,000 are temporary and about 60,000 are badli (casual) workers. Badli workers earn as little as Rs. 125 per month.

Bombay textile workers are in a sense pioneers of the working class movement in India. Organised into a union as early as the 1920s, they went on strike many times during the British period. Threatened by the growing militancy of the workers, the owners got the British Government to pass the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act in 1937. Later, after the famous strike in 1946, the act took its present shape and name - the Bombay Industrial Relations Act (BIRA). The BIRA applies to sugar, electricity, transport and textile industries.

### ONLY ONE TRADE UNION RECOGNIZED

The act envisages only one recognized union in the industry for all the workers in all the mills. The criteria for recognition are more or less arbitrary and are left to the Chief Labour Commissioner, with workers having little say in it. The provisions of the act are such that it is impossible to get recognition for any union unless it is backed by the government.

Ever since the act came into force,

the Congress-dominated Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh (RMMS) managed to remain the 'sole bargaining agent'. Operating with a network of paid goondas and in direct collusion with the owners, it never won the support of the workers. In the last 35 years, it never gave a strike call. By the BIRA act, a strike call by any other union is illegal.

The increasing cost of living and stagnating wages have forced the workers to take to the path of struggle again. For the last so many years, they have been denied the statutory minimum bonus of 8.33%. In addition, the increasing number of badli workers became a serious problem. As the RMMS refused to take up the issues, the workers had to voice their grievances through other unions.

On October 8, 1981, about 30,000 workers from 8 mills went on strike demanding revision of pay and payment of full bonus. The workers began to really round Dr. Datta Samant who eventually formed Maharashtra Girni Kamagar Union (MGKU). Soon MGKU attracted thousands of workers from all other mills. On January 19, 1982, all the 250,000 workers began their indefinite strike in response to a call by MGKU.

### WORKERS DEMAND HIGHER WAGES & RIGHT OF A UNION OF CHOICE

In the initial period, large number of workers left for their villages. This resulted in an unusual phenomenon of poor peasant and agricultural labourers expressing their solidarity with the organized working class and collecting grain to maintain their strike. But such efforts are necessarily limited. For the strike affected 1 million directly. In addition about 50,000 self-employed people dependent on textile workers have been rendered unemployed, forcing their families to starvation. Altogether the strike has affected one fifth of Bombay.

### GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE

The attitude of the government right from the beginning is characterized by its indifference to the demands and its violent opposition to the struggle. A slow but steady campaign of repression has marked the progress of the strike in the last 12 months. Meetings and processions by the MGKU were prohibited. Indiscriminate lathi charge, widespread arrests, constant police harassment of workers and their families, have all become regular features of textile worker colonies in central Bombay. During the police riots last August, 4 textile workers were killed in firings by armed forces. Large number of them were arrested under false charges and beaten up. All the leaders of the movement had been arrested under the NSA.

While the government is indulging in this systematic repression, the mill owners have adopted more subtle but equally heinous tactics. With the help of RMMS, they hire thugs to attack the workers on strike. They have consistently refused to allow any mediation efforts to take shape. In addition, they are conducting a well organized slander campaign against the strike and the workers. Unfortunately, the mass media in the country has become a willing tool in their hands - they have consistently taken up an unsympathetic attitude towards the strike. This is most probably due to the fact that most of the mill owners also own news paper establishments.

But the most unfortunate aspect of the strike has been the fact that MGKU is not affiliated to any of the nationally recognized trade unions. Unions such as BMS, AITUC, CITU, HMS, UTUC, etc., confined themselves to giving rather passive and reluctant support.

The combined effect of this direct and indirect repression has been the fact that people outside Bombay, including the working class, remained ignorant about the progress of the

strike, which in turn is fueling further repression. Such repression by the state, silence by the media, pressures by the owners, attacks by the goondas, passivity on the part of other unions - are all tending to isolate the striking workers. The workers had already lost Rs. 2,350 million in wages by the end of the first year of the strike. But these figures do not indicate the poverty, malnutrition, starvation, disease and death they are facing.

The establishment, though, is willing to suffer staggering financial losses. By the government's own admission, the industry suffered a production loss of Rs. 11,630 million by the end of the first year of the strike with an export loss worth Rs. 2100 millions during that period.

The stubborn attitude of the owners and the government can only be understood in the context of the demands of the workers. The textile workers are not merely demanding an increase in wages but fighting for their right to form a union of their choice. Their most important demand is the repeal of BIR act. The Act is the first of the legislations which while conceding the right to union on paper, denies it in effect. The struggle by Bombay textile workers to repeal the Act is a struggle to make the legal system accept the reality, a struggle to win a basic democratic right.

The democratic sections outside must realise that their own struggles will remain incomplete unless they join, in solidarity, this most bitter struggle the Indian trade union movement has ever seen in its sixty years history.

Based on a PUCL report published early this year.

## Labor Law Violators Treated Lightly

In a recent judgment on a writ petition filed by the People's Union for Democratic Rights and others, the Supreme Court has expressed shock that in cases of violation of labor laws enacted for the benefit of workers, magistrates have been imposing only small fines of Rs 200 or thereabouts.

The Supreme Court has also observed that magistrates seem to view the violations of labor laws with great indifference and unconcern as if they are trifling, odd and undeserving of judicial severity. They seem to overlook the fact that labor laws are enacted for improving the conditions of workers and that employers cannot be allowed to buy off immunity against violations by paying a paltry fine, which they would not mind paying since the violations bring them profits.

If violations of labor laws are going to be punished only by meager fines, they would remain only paper tigers without any teeth or claws.

The Supreme Court has therefore impressed on magistrates in the country that violations of labor laws must be viewed with seriousness and whenever any violations are established before them, they should punish errant employers by imposing adequate fines:

strike-breaking...

In these last 18 months, with authoritarianism nakedly and continuously hurled against 250,000 workers, parties which shout about "anti-authoritarianism" and make it a top issue in the list of their programmes have done nothing to mobilize any section of the population in support of the strike... Janata, Sharad Congress, CPI, CPM, and Peasants and Workers Party have not taken a single step for mobilizing for the textile strike.

## Sri Lanka Govt should Protect Tamils

continued from page 1

hard to understand. The government sought to organize a round table meeting with the opposition Tamil United Front and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. But both the opposition parties have spurned the offer of talks if the talks are not to be preceded by the guaranteeing of civil liberties to the affected Tamil minorities.

The Jayawardhane government came to power in 1977 claiming that it would convene a round table conference of all the political parties to attempt resolving the problems facing the Tamil minority. But in the last six years it has not done anything to implement its pre-election promise. At the same time the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) fought the parliament elections on the clear agenda of a separate Tamil state. The pressures to move towards that goal have been increasing on the leadership of the party because of the perceptible inaction on the part of the Jeyawardhane government to address the problems of the Tamil minority.

The formation of a yet smaller state within Sri Lanka is unlikely to pro-

## Hundreds Killed in Floods

continued from page 1

one half of the year and later floods taking a heavy toll of human lives and property. The agricultural production is affected which ultimately has a wide ranging impact on the whole national economy. Hundreds of thousands of poor people are made homeless and they lose whatever they might have built by hard labor over

vide a real solution to the economic and political problems of the Tamil minority. It has become evident that increased cooperation among the developing countries is an imperative for any improvement in the conditions of life of people in the poor countries. Such cooperation cannot be achieved by the process of fragmentation of the poor countries induced by the present internal realities of inequality and racial discrimination. It will be in the interest of the people of Sri Lanka and of the countries in the region that their problems are resolved peacefully and internally. A precondition for such development to occur is the guarantee of safety of life and basic civil rights for the minority people of Sri Lanka. The Jeyawardhane government should act to suppress the fire of racial violence. The Sri Lanka government has shown a reasonable attitude in its international relations and its appreciation of the importance of non-alignment to national independence. It would be necessary to extend that understanding to the internal problems of Sri Lanka so as to recognize that a stable Sri Lanka is not possible without a meaningful and just resolution of the sufferings faced by the Tamil minority.

the years. Sometimes, one part of the country is having severe drought conditions, where there are floods in the other parts. And, this is despite the fact that we claim to have one of the largest technical and scientific personnel and we are one of the most advanced industrial power at least among the third world countries. If nothing else, it is an glaring indication of how highly misplaced priorities of the powers that be are.

## Textile Strike

continued from page 1

gli, Satara and Pune...

True more than 100,000 workers have joined the mills. But this number is not of strike-breakers. Eighty percent of them have started going only very recently, during the last month, after the foot marches in February-March had ended. Vasantdada Patil, the Chief Minister, started saying that there is no strike, and so the question of negotiations does not arise. Workers, not able to see any prospects of the strike succeeding in the near future, and suffering extreme economic hardships, joined the mills like the wounded soldiers. But they have continued to maintain their organization as strikers and have shown their allegiance by not allowing Manohar Phalke, the installed new leader of the RMMS and brother-in-law of Vasantdada Patil, to enter the mills. They went to the extent of gheraoing him inside the mills, deflating the tires of his car and driving him out barefooted from the gates. That these workers are less determined than the almost 150,000 workers still remaining outside is an obvious fact. That they did not go inside because of the appeals of the government and Congress(I) leaders is also obvious from many incidents. In October 1982, the Central Government declared a Rs. 30 ad hoc raise and offered Rs 1500 as advance. Along with this enticement, they sent 150 buses to the villages with police and RMMS representatives and no workers responded. On the contrary, workers were organizing their jail bharos and attacking RMMS dadas even physically in many villages for



## Bandhuas of Palamau

The following is a summary of an article by MAHASWETA DEVI, Sahitya Academy award winner and well-known Bengali novelist, which appeared in the July 3, 1983 issue of the weekly SUNDAY magazine.

On May 1, 1983, Rameswar, the Editor of Ishumaan, organized a meeting of the bonded laborers in Daltonganj. These bandhuas (bonded labourers) came from 50 different villages in the district of Palamau, Bihar. The choupal (meeting) organised under the aegis of Ishumaan and the Palamau Bandhua Mukti Morcha (PBMM), was the first significant step in uniting bandhuas to make their presence felt.

Palamau is located in the north-western part of the Chottanagpur plateau. In 1857, this region had risen in revolt against the joint forces of the jagirdars and the British. The revolt was crushed, the fighters were hanged, the 'loyalists' were granted big jagirs. The hereditary zamindars of Palamau, the Brahmins and the Rajputs, are mostly descendants of the 'loyalists' of yesterday. After 1857, the zamindars and the moneylenders usurped all the land and the bandhu (debt-bondage) system was born.

In the bandhua system, which is prevalent in other parts of India also, a person borrows some money at exorbitant rates for reasons ranging from food, death in family, hunger, sickness, daughter's marriage, etc. The borrower then puts his thumb-impression on a paper and becomes

debt-bonded. From then on, he will work for the moneylender for an extremely low wage till the debt is repaid with interest. In reality, however, the debt is never repaid, for the interest goes on mounting and the debt repayment, thus, running for generations.

As Mohammed Karim, one of the 32 bandhuas owned by Taramoni Singh of village Soilay, narrates, "My father had once borrowed Rs 10 or 15 from Jagga Singh, Taramoni's father. He died after 45 years of bondage. I too have been a bandhu for the last 32 years. Between father and son, we have given 77 years of our lives, yet the debt remains unpaid. Why tell me that the law against bonded labour has been passed? My malik (master) does not know that. Who will tell him?" Taramoni Singh is believed to be a scholar and a learned man. He has left the bandhuas to his son Pitamber Lallu!

The above narration is typical of the stories of the various other bandhuas, who came forward to tell their stories at the choupal. Anyone who thinks the zamindari system has been abolished should visit Palamau. There is no such word as land-ceiling. The poor say they live on the zamindar's land, even though Bihar passed the land reforms bill in the fifties. Living in sub-human conditions, the wretched of Palamau continue to slave and the exploitation continues unabated. Neither the administration is interested nor are the political parties.

## Police Attack Conference of Landless

continued from page 2

some unconscious one opened his eyes after a sprinkle of water, he was beaten. Why? For allegedly pretending. Again, if one still managed to gaze was beaten for allegedly not being unconscious till then. One with a red shirt was beaten with particular venom for allegedly being a "Red Army" man and so also two others with a khaki trousers and "Hunter shoes" (both are worn by the police) for allegedly taking the guise of policemen to bluff the landlords. Generally, the well clad ones remained the main targets for allegedly being the leaders. Jyotirmoy Roy, taken to be the topmost leader of them, was beaten most severely. Even then, pointing towards him, a senior police officer shouted to his fellow men "If he wants water, give him mobile oil." Not only at the spot but also in their way to the police station and after, the cops kicked and punched the MKSS members and supporters at will. And, of course, there was no let up in calling names.

On May 18, 16 persons including children were let off and remaining 62 produced in the court for prosecution. Any worthy medical treatment reached them only in the evening of May 18, 36 hours after they were beaten up. Earlier, irrespective of one having a fracture or a cut, the injured were treated simply with a coating of mecurchrome and that's all.

So far, these were the actual happenings directed related to the May 17 incidents as could be gathered from first hand investigations and other sources like Krishna Singh, Secretary MKSS, who escaped arrest, some of the victims who were not finally put behind the bars and other villagers. But looking back, one discovers facts which are much more revealing.

### PERPETUAL SEC 144

MKSS became active in Jehanabad - an area geographically lying in between Pipra and Parasbigha - right around the time those carnages at Pipra and Parasbigha took place. MKSS focussed on 2 issues: (i) social discrimination and (ii) nonimplemen-

tation of stipulated minimum wages for agricultural laborers. As against the stipulated minimum wages of 6 lbs of rice and wheat, the laborers used to get less than 2 lbs of standard grain like khandsari (which is provenly harmful to health). This meagre quantity can hardly feed 1.5 heads per day.

In a short time, MKSS became popular with the landless laborers. Even in the teeth of feudal gangsterism rampant in the area, landless masses under its banner managed to earn the minimum wages in ever increasing number of villages. This they did entirely on their own as they were totally fed up with the government and its machinery. These developments were quite disturbing for the local administration.

On November, 1981, the MKSS organized a massive - militant but disciplined - rally at Jehanabad town. Ever since that rally, the administration took no chances and Sec 144 was clamped on that area in a perpetual manner. Aroon C. Verma, the then Assistant Superintendent of Police at Jehanabad, unabashedly told this correspondent on November 19, 1982, "It (Sec. 144) is as normal as the wind here. It expires on the 26th and promulgated on the 27th of every month." When a joint fact-finding team of Association for Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR - West Bengal) and People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR - Delhi) visited Jehanabad last February, they asked Nasim Ahmed, the then SP of Gaya, "Is there any instance of any rally of MKSS turning violent?" The SP simply evaded the question.

This correspondent had the chance to witness on Nov 19, 1982, how a Jehanabad bound procession of MKSS was battered by the police. Mounted police ran their horses onto the peaceful marchers spearheaded by women and children. Krishna Singh, Secretary MKSS, cited another example. Hand in glove with the local landlords, the police charged on a peaceful gathering at Jamuk villages on July 2, 1982. Taking advan-

## 5 Adivasis Flogged in Bihar

continued from page 2

According to Suraj Mandal, an MLA and a leader of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, 50 tribals had been shot dead by the police for demanding bread and employment.

In another development, the BJP sources reported that 4 people had died of starvation in Santhal Parganas, Chotanagpur and Dhanbad districts.

### NO CONFIDENCE MOTION AGAINST MISHRA

Congress(I) government of Jagannath Mishra in Bihar survived a no-confidence motion on June 21 introduced by 3 members of BJP and a member of the Marxist Coordination Committee. The motion which drew 174 votes against it and 93 in favor, said that the government has forfeited its right to stay in office because of rampant corruption, failure to provide drinking water to drought-sufferers in the tribal belt, total breakdown of law and order and gross inability to run the Kumardhubi group of industries after their takeover by the state.

Several opposition members including those belonging to Janata party, CPI, CPM, Lok Dal, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and the Marxist Coordination Committee, did not participate in the vote because the main sponsor of the motion BJP did not consult any other opposition parties. When the motion was admitted in the assembly on June 20, the entire opposition had stood up in support of

it. Opposition members had made unsuccessful attempts to introduce an amendment to the no-confidence motion. Suraj Mandal of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha wanted to include reference to police atrocities in the tribal belt of Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas.

## Indian Govt Buying South Africa's Asbestos

Indian government has allegedly been importing asbestos fiber of South African origin for use in manufacturing of pipes. According to a report in Financial Express, the fiber does not come directly from South Africa; instead, it is via companies operating in other countries, one of them in United Kingdom.

The report said that both officials in the state run Minerals and Metals Trading corporation and other trade circles know very well that the fiber originates in South Africa, but they have chosen to ignore it. Last year, 6000 tonnes of blue asbestos were imported to India through Botswana. Blue fiber is considered to be a health hazard and is banned in many countries.

Indian government has taken stand in the past of supporting economic, cultural and trade sanctions imposed against the apartheid regime by the United Nations, Commonwealth countries and third world countries.



## Was Pradip Bind Killed? or Murdered?

Our Special Correspondent

According to the official version as had been reported by Hind Samachar, Pradip Bind of village Patariah, a "captain of extremist gang" ("judge of a Naxalite court" according to another news agency) was killed in an encounter with the police and 17 others were arrested. "Receiving information that the Captain along with his associates was making plans to kill a rich farmer, KC Saha and Balbir Chand, respectively the District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police of Gaya, raided the village with armed police," the report said. It further added that the extremists opened fire and the

tage of the confusion that ensued, local landlords killed one landless laborer

and injured many. But the police, far from bringing those landlords to book, arrested 21 supporters of MKSS-Krishna Singh alleged. "Ever since we have emerged as an organized force here, the administration is trying its best to throttle our voice. They did not bother to disturb rallies of the CPI and other parties held right in the heart of Jehanabad town in the face of Sec. 144 having been in force," Singh added.

Whatever his allegations, one fact is glaringly evident. Just the day after it reported the Jehanabad incident, Indian Nation, the leading English daily from Patna, frontpaged a news item titled, "Kisans concerned at Naxa activities" on May 19. (In the local journalistic parlance, 'kisan' means landlord and rich peasants and not the peasantry as such.) The report was about the inauguration of the first "Magadh division Kisan Sammelan" held with much fanfare in Gaya. One least conversant with things in Bihar knows very well that such are the conferences which raise money to float mercenary feudal contingents of goons like "Bhoomi Sena" run on the line of the Ku Klux Klan. Do not such conferences incite violence? Do not they threaten law and order?

Who would answer?

This is Jagannath Mishra's Bihar. This is Indira's India.

police had to retaliate in self-defence and Pradip Bind was found dead on the spot.

First hand investigation however revealed an entirely different story. Pradip Bind was a landless peasant of Patariah. He along with 17 others slept in open space (as the villagers usually do in summer days) in the Harijan Toli (cluster) of Patariah on May 7 night. The police came and encircled the village sometime in the dead of night. With daybreak, they entered into the village and arrested all 18 persons found outdoors. They were taken to a spot on a kutchra road on the southern tip of the village. There in full view of some of the villagers, the police knocked Pradip to a roadside ditch (which was dry) and fired from above killing him on the spot. The villagers said that far from being a "captain" or a "judge" Pradip had little to do with MKSS activities or for that matter, extremism. "We have seen so many raids and arrests. But this incident was totally unprovoked and unjustified," they added.

And, all this happened in the presence of no less personalities than the DM and the SP.

Although it is not possible for ignorant villagers to identify or ascertain whether the DM and SP were really present, but if the press reports are taken at their face value, it must be said that whatever happened at Patariah village on May 8 morning had the sanction of at least the district level administration. In fact, it is learnt that 800 or more policemen came from Gaya town to Jehanabad to execute the operation on May 17. Krishna Singh repeatedly stressed the May 8 incident of Patariah to be very much connected with the May 17 incident. "They had 2 objectives in mind. First, to terrorize the people. Remember that Patariah is hardly 2 km away from the proposed conference site. Secondly, to prepare a ground for clamping Sec. 144 (it was revoked for a few months in early '83) afresh. And, so some encounter story became necessary for them," he alleged.



## ANKK Completes American tour

Javeed Mirza

The first US performance of the Amritsar Natak Kela Kendar was in New York at the Wollman auditorium in Columbia University on July 17th to an audience of 400 people. After an introductory song, Sardar Gursharan Singh, the troupe director, recalled in brief the glorious history of the Sikh people. Then the troupe started the drama "Chandni Chawk ton Sirhand tak". Back, during the Emergency period, Gursharan Singh had been arrested for staging the play right in front of Zail Singh, the present president of India. The play portrays the martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh's sons by the tyrant Nawab Vazir Khan and the subsequent fall and killing of the Nawab by Banda Bahadur. The play clearly conveyed the message that the killings and harassment being done by the Indian government (like the present-day "encounters") would in turn produce a Banda Bahadur who would similarly avenge the martyrs death.

Following this drama, the audience was treated to a satirical comedy named "Toha" (the Pit), based on a short play by the noted Urdu novelist Kishan Chander. The play captures the plight of a poor rural working woman who falls down in a pit. Her screams draws the PWD supervisor who is intent on measuring the pit but has no ear for the womens pleas to help her out. The policeman who follows is merely interested in recording information (her name, etc.) and giving her a ticket, and leaves; the foreign expert is keen only to get her views on the "development" problem; even the sadhu who comes by, departs with the words, "the whole world is a pit... I bless you wherever you are..."

The following day, Gursharan Singh gave a talk on the Punjab situation at an informal meeting at the New School of Social Research. He highlighted the various economic and social problems the poor were facing

in the light of increasing prices, unemployment, water shortage for agricultural purposes, denial of ethnic, cultural, and religious rights to minorities, etc., and that the agitation was a response to these basic problems. To such a crisis, the Central government had consistently adopted an attitude of passivity and postponement and was now playing one community against the other with an eye to harness votes in the next elections.

Before the speech, the troupe performed a 3 act drama called "Tamassha" (entertainment). The different acts highlighted themes of corruption, antiquated medicine, and surgery at Government hospitals. The play ends with the central character questioning the audience, "Are you going to be a mere passive onlooker or are you going to intervene and change?"

In a talk with the reporter, Gursharan Singh expounded his ideas: big bureaucrats and rich people in India not only want to monopolize wealth but also our culture. "It was to meet this challenge that I took to the theatre. My theatre is a street theatre. Eighty percent of Indian people live in villages, which have no regular drama halls and so most of the time I use two bullock carts as a platform and use kerosene lamps for light where there is no electricity."

"Mrs. Gandhi has developed a system in which people have become sycophants or 'Ji Huzur' (yes, sir) people. The present life in India is not worth living in the 20th century. My commitment is to draw Indian people towards revolution. It is the commitment to the people that has given me strength in the theatre."

Asked what he planned to do on going back home after the UK tour (which includes a schedule of a dozen appearances), he said he would like to write a play on the North American Community. And as he asserted earlier, "it is the duty of every citizen, dramatist to fight against the present system."

## IPANA Commemorates 1857

Minoo Gundevia

On May 10, 1857, the British exploiters in India experienced the wrath of the indigenous population. IPANA(Montreal) in collaboration with La Cinematheque Quebecoise organized a Festival of Indian Films to mark the 126th anniversary of India's First War of Independence (1857). The Festival was held on the 10th, 11th and 12th June, 1983.

In all, 6 main features - Pather Panchali, Aparajito, Apur Sansar, Garam Hawa, Junoon and Bhumika - and 3 documentaries - Dictators, Accursed, and An Indian Story - were screened for this occasion. All the films attracted large crowd. On the whole, the total attendance of the spectators for all 3 days combined was approximately 900. A small exhibition of the history of Indian films and a display of IPANA publications drew a lot of attention.

The Festival brought to the memory

### Documentary on Mrinal Sen Planned

Bengali Director-Producer Mrinal Sen will be the subject of a 45-minute documentary to be made by West German film-maker Reinhard Hauff. Mrinal Sen is often credited for initiating the new wave era in Hindi films with his Bhuvan Shome. His films have won many awards nationally and internationally. Sen's latest film Kharij (The case is closed) won the Special Jury award at the Cannes

of the audience the historical significance of India's First War of Independence. In 1857, for the first time since the British set their feet in India, the Indian people - Hindus and Muslims, men and women - launched a concerted opposition at the national level to the foreign exploiters. Several thousands of people were brutally massacred in the ensuing struggle. Even though the armed struggle was eventually brought to control, it proved to the British rulers that the Indian people were not passive 'ascetics' as it was commonly believed then outside India. (This misconception, it seems, is still imbibed in the minds of many people.)

India's First War of Independence is a historical event that reminds us of the courage, bravery, and self-sacrifice of our people. IPANA commemorates and salutes the thousands of martyrs who lost their lives to rid the country of foreign exploiters.

Film Festival.

Sen is currently working on a Hindi film "Khandhar" on a decaying aristocratic family. Hauff plans to film Sen during the shooting of "Khandhar." Hauff also intends to incorporate from Sen's earlier works. Hauff is famous for having made films highlighting the Nazi period in Germany.

## Chokh (The Eye)

DAYA VARMA

This 98-minute color film, written and directed by Utpalendu Chakraborty, is a powerful depiction of the life of a revolutionary leader Jadunath. The period is December 1975. India is under the state of National Emergency.

Jadunath is to be hanged. His last wish is that after his death his eyes be used to restore the vision of a fellow blind worker who has never seen this world.

The film opens with Jadunath, played by Om Puri, inside the prison on the night before he is to be executed. As the film unfolds, a conflict develops over the fate of Jadunath's eyes after the execution. Jethia, a powerful business magnate with wide connections with politicians and the bureaucracy, and a sizeable bunch of paid goons takes steps to procure the eyes for a corneal transplant for his own son blinded in a violent clash between two rival parties of ruling circles.

As Jethia's men move to illegally procure Jadunath's eyes and pressure Dr Mukherjee to transplant the cornea from Jadunath's eyes to Jethia's son, the hospital driver and a few local workers inform the doctor of Jadunath's wish. Ghanshyam, the driver, once an employee of Jethia, tells the doctor how Jadunath came to be hanged.

Jadunath was hanged on a false charge of a murder that resulted after an attack by Jethia's men on striking workers. Several workers were killed and many more wounded. In retaliation, some angry workers had killed Jethia's brother and the manager of the jute mill. Although Jadunath was not involved in the killing, he was picked up for execution because of his role as a sincere and militant working class leader.

Once the true story is disclosed, Dr Mukherjee refuses to perform the operation unless the papers concerning Jadunath's eyes are verified. He defies pressure from the superintendent of the hospital and Jethia's goons.

### Montreal Film Festival to have New Indian Films

The Montreal Film Festival will run from August 18 through August 28. There will be some Indian films again this year. The final selections have yet to be made, but most probably Utpalendu Chakravarty's "Chokh", which was awarded the Silver Peacock at the International Film Festival in New Delhi, last December will be screened (for a review, see an accompanying article). This is the film-maker's second film. His first, a documentary, "Mukti Chai", was a civil liberties film.

### After Aakrosh, Nihalani makes Aardh Satya

Among the new film offering this fall in India, Govind Nihalani's "Aardh Satya" promises to be compulsive viewing and has been described by INDIA TODAY as the "most important film of the year." Starring Om Puri and Smita Patil, the film is about the Indian police, viewed from the personal history of one man who is driven to completely break down as a human being. It shows the relationship between the police and the underworld and how corruption infiltrates any local thana. The film is based on a Marathi short story by S.D. Panvalkar.

Yet another episode follows. Jethia, bearing utter contempt for the workers and particularly for their leader Jadunath, has second thoughts about using the eyes for his son. His enemy's eyes on his own son is unacceptable. He orders that the eyes be smuggled out of the hospital and destroyed. So it happens.

In the meantime, workers organize to demand that Jadunath's eyes be used for Chhedilal, a blind worker. A demonstration is confronted by the police but defiantly moves on. The film ends with demonstrating workers filling the screen.

Chokh is Utpalendu Chakraborty's third film. The first was a documentary Mukti Chai, on political prisoners, and the second Moyna Tadanta (post-mortem). Utpalendu, like many sensitive youth of the 1967-71 period (beginning of the armed peasant struggle in Naxalbari and after) was drawn into turbulent political activity. He participated in the movement with hope for the future of millions of Indian people. Utpalendu is now expressing his political convictions through films and Chokh is meant to be a film with a strong political message. Chokh is at once a story of one worker as well as of hundreds and thousands of workers whom Jadunath represents, of the unscrupulous and ruthless business tycoon, and of the connivance between the state and the propertied class, of a world where the professional middle class is divided between those who can be bought for a pittance (the superintendent of the hospital) and those who stand for honesty and dignity (Dr Mukherjee).

In portraying this theme, the director succeeds brilliantly. Anyone who watches the film cannot but notice how laws are bent and twisted to serve the interests of the propertied class and how workers retain their fighting spirit and hope for the future even after physical death.

By intention and execution Chokh is meant to be a socio-political film. In the main it succeeds but as the film develops, particularly in the last third, it tends to become melodramatic. The emphasis shifts from the social content of the film to suspense and conspiracy around the stealing of the eye from the eye bank in the hospital. Scenes focus on how someone unlocks the door to the bank, how nurses help open the freezer and how the eye is being smuggled out as if someone is going to catch the thief. This part could have been done not in a note of mystery but in a note of wrath.

To some extent the film reveals how its characters and scenes are affected either by the present political orientation of the director or the fact that the film was financed by the Left Front government of West Bengal. Perhaps both. If Jadunath was supposed to represent a revolutionary communist leader, it would have been more realistic to portray him representing communist ideals rather than being a member of CPM. It seems rather artificial that anyone has that profound faith in CPM as Jadunath says during the film. There

continued on page 12

### Tamilean Singer Harassed in Sri Lanka

Tamilean Singer Harassed in Sri Lanka

Noted South Indian Classical singer ML Vasanta Kumari received threatening phone calls during a visit to Sri Lanka to perform concerts. The phone calls came after local newspapers said she had made statements on the separatist movement of Sri Lankan Tamils.



# Algae as a Source of Protein

Spirulina, a multi-cellular filamentous blue-green alga which is found free-floating in all types of aquatic environments, has interested scientists for many years. It is a particularly rich source of protein and is thought to have a promising future as a food for both man and domestic animals, particularly in developing countries.

The use of algae as food for humans has been known for many centuries. According to descriptions found in the historical documents found of Mexico, the Aztecs scooped the bluish slimy accumulations of Spirulina from Lake Texcoco, dried them in the sun and moulded them into small loaves which resembled and tasted like cheese. This same alga also grows in the brackish waters of Lake Chad in central Africa, from where it is collected, sun-dried and sold in the local markets as a food under the name of "Biri".

Blue-green algae are also a form of sustenance for large numbers of people in East Asia. The Chinese collect a bloom called "lan" from ponds and freshwater lakes; the Javanese sit a similar bloom from ponds called "keklop" and use it chiefly as a fish feed; and the Japanese dry one species of Spirulina into sheets which are heated in water before eaten.

## RESEARCH INTO ALGAE

A group of 4 scientists, PN Saxena, MR Ahmad, R Shyam and DV Amla, from the National Botanical Research Institute in Lucknow have spent the past ten years or so working on a unique pilot project to cultivate Spirulina platensis on raw municipal sewage.

The soft technology they have developed is not only an excellent example of the recycling of nutrients - still rare in all parts of the world - but it also kills several birds with one stone. Spirulina is sun-dried into flakes which can be used as a nutritious chicken feed; the semi-treated municipal sewage can be fed to a polyculture of commercial carp; and the resultant benign effluent can be discharged into water-ways for irrigation purposes.

About 10 vitamins have also been identified in Spirulina, together with substantial quantities of calcium, phosphorous, potassium and other trace elements which have an important function in nutrition. Unlike green algae, Spirulina does not have a rigid cellulose wall easily digestible.

## USING CITY SEWAGE FOR ALGAE PRODUCTION

A big stumbling block right from the start was the culture solution. Since Spirulina flourishes in brackish water, the addition of expensive mineral salts was clearly required. Then the question arose whether municipal sewage could be used as a culture medium. It contained varying

amounts of dissolved nutrient salts so if it could be successfully adapted to support a luxuriant growth of blue-green algae, then the result would be algal protein for animal feed as well as reclaimed water and a low-cost project.

Using selection and cloning methods the Lucknow team eventually produced about 7 strains of Spirulina which could happily tolerate the sewerage medium. The only precondition for a luxuriant algal growth was an addition of 0.1% of sodium nitrate and 1% of sodium bicarbonate to ensure the necessary degree of alkalinity.

## HOW TO GROW ALGAE

There are 4 major steps in the cultivation of Spirulina: the preparation of the inoculum, the mass outdoor cultivation in shallow ponds, harvesting and drying. First of all the alga is grown indoors in fortified sewage for up to 10 days under fluorescent lamps. The dense cultures thus produced are then transferred to small outdoor basins where they are again allowed to grow for between 10 to 20 days, depending on the season of the year. The resultant cultures are used as the seeding material for the mass outdoor cultivation ponds.

Raw municipal sewage is pumped into the ponds from a storage well linked directly to Lucknow's main underground sewer. The sewage is fortified with sodium bicarbonate and the sodium nitrate and the liquid in the ponds vigorously agitated to ensure their even distribution. Each pond is then inoculated with Spirulina culture which produces a luxuriant growth within 15 to 20 days. Once a bloom has developed no further inoculation is necessary and the alga is ready for harvesting.

There are only a few precautions that have to be taken during this 15 to 20 day period to ensure intensive algal growth. Evaporation necessitates regular additions of sewage and fortification with the two mineral salts to keep the volume and composition of the culture medium constant. The medium should also be agitated for 3 to 5 minutes every hour by blowing compressed air through the aeration pipes. More practical and equally efficient, however, is the manual stirring of the liquid using the home-made brushing device.

Just as simple is the daily harvesting of Spirulina. Preferable is a filtration cloth made of polyester or nylon mesh; if cotton is used the algal filaments are likely to stick to the net, making their complete recovery impossible. The algal slurry on the filtration cloth is then washed several times with water to remove the salts, spread on plastic sheets and dried in the sun. Since dried Spirulina is not susceptible to fermentation, it can be stored easily.

# Factory for Herbal Medicine in Gujarat

First plant to process isabgol, a medicinal herb grown in vast quantities in north Gujarat, has been set up in Mehsana, Gujarat. The plant set up by Gujarat Drug and Chemicals Ltd at a cost of Rs 14 million would produce 400 tons of isabgol formulations every year. A similar plant for producing medical formulations from garlic is being set up in Kutch district.

At the inauguration of the plant, Gujarat Chief Minister Madhavsingh Solanki said, "while foreigners themselves were using isabgol on a large scale as a laxative, the people of this country were using costly imported items." Central Deputy Minister of Health Kumud Joshi said that there was a greater need for conducting research in ayurveda.

# Born to Die

continued from page 3

mortality rate (number of babies, one year or less old, who die out of 1000 born alive) in Kerala was 47 (the lowest in India) in 1977. It was 168 in UP and 130 for India.

The fewer the number of babies dead, the lower is the level of the mother's fertility, and hence the fewer the babies born. How does a decline in infant mortality lower the level of fertility? The most important mechanism is what demographers call the "insurance effect," which Ela Bhatt was emphasizing. When uncertainty about survival of children is high, parents who depend mostly on children for old age security and as insurance against many potential risks, tend towards "compensation" - often overcompensation - for the loss of children. They breed more, even more than they need.

There is another mechanism through which a fall in infant mortality can induce a decline in fertility. It is the infrastructure required for reducing infant deaths. A rural worker delivering services in maternal and child health is in a much more effective and advantageous position to talk family planning to a new mother than a family planning worker.

## SURVEY FINDING

The fact that a decline in infant mortality lowers the level of fertility becomes clear from an analysis of recent world fertility survey data collected from 25 countries and presented in a UN symposium in Delhi on January 5-11. The data indicate that in high infant mortality countries where very few parents are motivated to limit fertility, reducing infant deaths may be a more cost-effective way of reducing fertility than a conventional family planning program.

India has not done well in reducing infant mortality, though it has succeeded in significantly raising life expectancy by cutting down the overall death rate. The crude death rate (number of deaths per 1000 population) in 1978 was 13, about one-quarter of what it used to be in 1911-20 (47). But the infant mortality rate in 1978 was 125, more than half of what it was in 1911-1920 (204).

The decline in the overall death rate in India has occurred mostly because of public health measures against mass-killing diseases like small pox, cholera, malaria and tuberculosis. (In recent years, however, the rate of decline has slowed down). The reduction in infant and child mortality is a more difficult task. It is almost impossible to bring down India's infant mortality rate to a level below 20 (which is true for all industrial countries) in the foreseeable future. But is it extremely difficult to bring it down from 125 in 1978 to 60 in 2000 (the target fixed by the government)? It should not be, when we know that Kerala could bring it down to 47 by 1977.

# India Pakistan on Arms Buying Spree

According to the Washington based Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the world's total arms imports during 1976-1980 were around \$110.5 billion out of which the developed countries accounted for \$24.1 billion and third world nations had imports of \$86.4 billion.

South Asian countries spent 4.4 billion dollars, with India topping the list with 2.8 billion, followed by Pakistan 1.1 billion, Afghanistan \$460 million, Bangladesh \$70 million and Sri Lanka \$20 million. These figures do not include money spent on arms manufactured domestically; India has one of the most developed arms manufacturing industries among third world nations.

India's major weapons supplier was

Russia with \$ 2.3 billion of sales, followed by Britain \$160 million and Czechoslovakia \$70 million. Russia was also the major arms supplier for Bangladesh and Sri Lanka although these two neighbours of India import a miniscule amount compared to India's imports. Pakistan's major arms supplier during 1976-80 was France with sales of \$390 million followed by US with sales of \$220 million.

According to the State Department and Pentagon sources, both India and Pakistan have been on an arms-buying spree during the last two years. In 1981-82, India and Pakistan bought arms worth Rs 3.6 billion. In 1982, Pakistan bought arms worth \$1.5 billion, mostly F-16 aircrafts from US; during 1983 it is to buy

There is a large difference between the rural and urban areas regarding infant and child mortality. In 1978, the infant mortality rate in rural areas was 138 compared to 70 in urban areas. Hence the program for reducing infant mortality should concentrate more on rural areas where 76% of India's population live. The main socio-economic factors that cause high infant mortality in rural areas are malnutrition (particularly among pregnant women and infants of 6-12 months), low age at marriage of women despite legislation fixing a higher marriageable age, and the pitifully high illiteracy rate (particularly among women). Programs designed to change these conditions are essential not only for reducing infant mortality but also for overall development.

## NEONATAL DEATHS

Nothing startling or highly expensive is required, but only that priorities in public health measures are based on knowledge of the primary causes of infant deaths and on a rough cost-benefit analysis of remedies that work. Let me suggest just one priority measure, citing some supporting evidence. It is well-known that of the infants that die in India within one year of birth, 36% die within one month. These are known as neonatal deaths. It is, however, not so well known that about one-half of the neonatal deaths, specially in rural areas, are caused by tetanus infection.

In a recent survey conducted in five districts of UP, it was found that tetanus accounted for 53% of 10,040 neonatal deaths. Tetanus infection can be easily avoided if pregnant mothers and newborn babies are immunized, and if villagers are sensitized to the need for immunization through community education and involvement.

In the country as a whole, only about 20% of expectant mothers were immunized against tetanus in 1980-81. There are, however, a few silver linings in this vast area of darkness. In my recent visits to two villages, one in Kerala and the other in Punjab, I learnt that during 1982, all expectant mothers in these two villages had been immunized against tetanus.

## HIGHLY VALUED REMEDY

My experience in these villages also prompts me to suggest that awards be given to rural health workers for special achievements in saving infants from death. This aspect of their work is certainly no less important than that of family planning.

Let me emphasize that improvement in rural public health measures alone will not be enough to attain the infant mortality reduction target. Other socio-economic changes along with nutritional programs are indeed necessary. Nor is reduction of infant and child mortality just a long-term means to reduce fertility and population growth. It surely is a highly-valued end in itself for humanitarian and many other reasons.

(from the Indian Express)

addition \$ 150 million worth and in 1984, \$300 million from US.

India bought 40 Mirage-2000 in April, 1982 from France with a total value of sales worth \$3 billion which also accounts for Indian plan to manufacture 110 Mirages in India. India was also planning to buy submarines from West Germany. India has recently announced plans to buy more arms from US and tanks and MIGs from Russia.





# Center Imposes President's Rule in Pondicherry

R N Raju

The DMK-led government of Pondicherry was dismissed and the 30-member Assembly was dissolved by the Central government on June 24. The Center's decision followed the withdrawal of support to the DMK-led cabinet by the Congress(I) legislators and the resignations of the Congress(I) ministers from the cabinet. This is the sixth time that President's rule is being imposed in the Union Territory since the inception of the territory in 1964.

The decision by the central government presumably followed the advice given by the Lt. Governor of the Union Territory, KM Chandy. The DMK held 13 of the Assembly seats while its coalition partner Congress(I) held 10 seats. Following the withdrawal of Congress(I) from the coalition, the Janata Party, CPI(M) and Indian Union Muslim League extended their support to the DMK to continue in government. However, according to Chandy, the DMK either by itself or with the support of others could not provide a stable administration. In his report to the center, Chandy said that the request of the Chief Minister to prove his strength on the floor of the House seemed to be a thinly disguised attempt to indulge in horse-trading. Since the next largest group in the Assembly, the Congress(I) did not choose to form a government, Chandy said that President's rule should be imposed.

A delegation of the Janata Party, CPI(M), Indian Union Muslim League and DMK had earlier met with Chandy to affirm the support of their parties to the DMK. Chandy said that while the Janata Party had extended support to the government, he was taking into consideration the fact that one of the Janata legislators had not withdrawn his memorandum against the government submitted earlier to the Lt. Governor. Consequently, Chandy claimed that he could not be convinced of the viability

of support for the continuance of the ministry headed by D Ramachandran.

As in the case of States, a Union Territory can be put under President's rule for a maximum of one year and then fresh elections should be held.

The imposition of President's rule in Pondicherry has been condemned by all the opposition parties.

The dismissal of the DMK ministry had been anticipated for the past many months. A number of events indicated the souring of relations between the DMK and the Congress(I) and the emergence of new relations between the ruling party in Tamil Nadu and at the Center. In the 1981 bye-election to the Lok Sabha from Tirupattur, the Congress(I) was defeated by the Anna DMK. The Congress(I) blamed its defeat on the failure of the DMK to provide a committed support to it. In the more recent elections to the Rajya Sabha from the state legislative assemblies, the Congress(I) refused to support the candidature of the DMK leader K Manoharan from the Tamil Nadu Assembly. In fact, it had tacitly accepted the support of Anna DMK in order to gain victory for its own candidate G Moopanar. There is growing sentiment within the Congress(I) that an alliance with the Anna DMK is imperative, if the party has to win any reasonable number of Lok Sabha seats in any forthcoming elections. More important than that is the opportunity to cause some disruption in the united efforts of the opposition Chief Ministers, particularly those of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry who had met earlier for talks on improved Center-States relations. The dismissal of the DMK ministry in Pondicherry provides a number of advantages to the ruling Congress(I) and the extent to which it could reap these advantages depends on the response of the opposition parties.

## Shanti Debi of Purba Lohanipur

continued from page 7

the cops started beating us up. I cannot show you all the wounds they inflicted on us.

--Do you have the name of the cops?

--Oh, everybody knows. The papers published it also. Ranbijay Singh, he is the inspector of the thana. He was the one beating us up in Kadamkuan thana. even my old mother Jhuna Debi was beaten up. We have bruises all over our bodies. They then started dacoity cases against me and sent me to the PMCH hospital. For 13 days I was in the hospital and my comrades visited me.

--What was reported in the press about the incident?

--There was a big furor, because my pictures and some interviews came out in big newspapers. The assembly politicians raised hell about the issue. On July 14 (last year), there was an

hour-long discussion. The government had nothing to say, what will they say? Even the opposition, what do they care? We are poor, they are not on our side.

--What about the men in the slums? What is their attitude? Do they boss the women around? Do they create problems for you? How do you deal with that kind of problem?

--We have done certain things to stop the men from carrying on any nonsense. We started a movement against alcohol. That was effective. But we don't worry about such problems too much now. Right now we want our dignity as poor working people. If there are some men who are loafers within our community, you think we cannot straighten them out? I have taken on the local DSP, why can't I fix up a local fazil (loafer)?

## Antulay Trial Discharged

A R Antulay, former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, finally got what he had wanted from Indian legal system at the outset. The special judge of the Sessions Court RB Sule discharged Antulay on July 25 from trial for charges under the Prevention of Corruption Act for want of sanction from the state assembly. The judge said in his order that as a member of the legislative assembly, Antulay still enjoyed the status of a public servant. So, the assembly alone could grant a valid sanction for his prosecution under corruption charges. Sule made it clear that he was discharging Antulay for want of jurisdiction and not on merit.

The judge rejected the contention of Ram Jethmalani appearing for the

complainants, Ram Das Nayak a former BJP assembly man and PB Samant that an assembly man could not be called a public servant and that the state governor's sanction, already obtained remained valid to try Antulay under the corruption charges.

The ruling suggests that according to the legal system, if you are an assembly man and have a lot of clout, you can be corrupt and engaged in illegal activities without being touched by the law.

Antulay was earlier convicted by the Bombay high court in connection with various trusts he had floated during his chief ministership and raised hundreds of millions of rupees allegedly in exchange for political and

# Revolutionary Mahakavi Sri Sri Passes Away

Revolutionary Telugu poet 'Srirangam Srinivasa Rao (popularly known as Sri Sri) passed away on June 15 at the age of 73. Born in 1910, Sri Sri was a trend setter in modern Telugu poetry and has won a place in Telugu literature with the identification of what authors refer to as the Sri Sri age in Telugu literature. His best work is considered to be the anthology 'Mahaaprastahaanam' of which there have been 50 reprints so far.

Sri Sri came into the Telugu literary scene in the early 1930s. He wrote a series of powerful poems that ignited the minds of youth and tore to shreds the decaying superstructure of feudal culture. Sri Sri's poetry was rich with allusions to Hindu mythology and he thus sought to awake the revolutionary spirit of Indian youth in the best traditions of Indian culture. Sri Sri was not confined to the traditional forms of poetry but blazed a new trend in the Telugu literary scene with his powerful use of the free verse form.

Sri Sri was a poet always close to the revolutionary movements of his times. He was a staunch supporter of the Communist Party of India following the period of Telengana movement when severe repression was let loose on the party. At the time of the Sino-Indian border conflict, he worked as the President of the Andhra Pradesh wing of the Civil Liberties Union to mobilize public opinion against the government's attack on those who were critical of

## Chokh (The Eye)

continued from page 10

is a recorded case of a communist worker donating his eyes after hanging during the Emergency but he was a rebel from CPM and not its follower.

However, none of the weaknesses dominate the film. What does dominate is the sharpness of the class conflict between the working class and the capitalists, a sense of unity, dedication and courage of the working class, unscrupulousness and fear of the propertied class.

Perhaps the political views of the viewer will determine her/his evaluation of the film but none can fail to admire the qualities of the film contained in its theme, message, development and direction. The awards it has won, Silver Peacock at the Delhi Film Festival and the best Indian film of 1982, are well-deserved.

## Most States Below per Capita Income

Per capita yearly income in 1981-82 was Rs 1750 in current prices with only four out of 19 states being above the average mark. Punjab had the highest per capita income: Rs 3122, next was Maharashtra with Rs 2519. The other two states above average were Haryana with Rs 2335 and Gujarat with Rs 2211. The lowest per capita income was reported in Tripura - Rs 881; Bihar's was Rs 9 more: Rs 870. All southern states were below Rs 1500 with Andhra leading with Rs 1487. The most populous state UP's per capita was Rs 1309 and Assam stood at Rs 1373.

The figures were based on the data issued by states statistical bureaus and All India average was obtained from Central statistical organization. Meghalaya, Sikkim and Nagaland do not prepare estimates of state domestic products.

economic favors. Following the conviction, Antulay was forced to resign.

Nayak has announced to file a special leave petition before the Supreme Court challenging the order of the Special Judge.

Immediately after the court order, Antulay told reporters that he would soon be back in active politics.

its border policy.

In the late sixties when the revolutionary movement of Srikakulam and Naxalbari caught the imagination of progressive people, Sri Sri took a decisive step to identify with the movement of the peasant revolutionaries. Sri Sri was instrumental in the formation of the Revolutionary Writers Association (Virasam) of which he was the Founder-President and a member till his death.

In the early seventies, when the revolutionaries of Naxalbari and Srikakulam were repressed and decimated by the state machinery and when a state of terror was maintained against all progressives who supported the Naxalbari movement, Sri Sri became a relentless crusader against the police state and a defender of the democratic rights of the revolutionaries. When three revolutionary writers of Andhra Pradesh were arrested he wrote an angry note to the Andhra Home Minister and gave his address as c/o Nagabhushan Patnaik, wherever he may be. At that time Patnaik was in jail at Visakhapatnam sentenced to death by hanging. Sri Sri struggled to rouse public sentiment against the death sentence awarded to Bhoomiah and Kista Gowd, two peasant activists who were hanged during the Emergency.

Sri Sri was not only a Mahakavi but throughout his life a committed revolutionary, defender of democracy and a relentless activist. As someone said in a tributary, all was vacuum before Sri Sri and all is again vacuum after him.

(Excerpted from the Economic and Political Weekly).

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